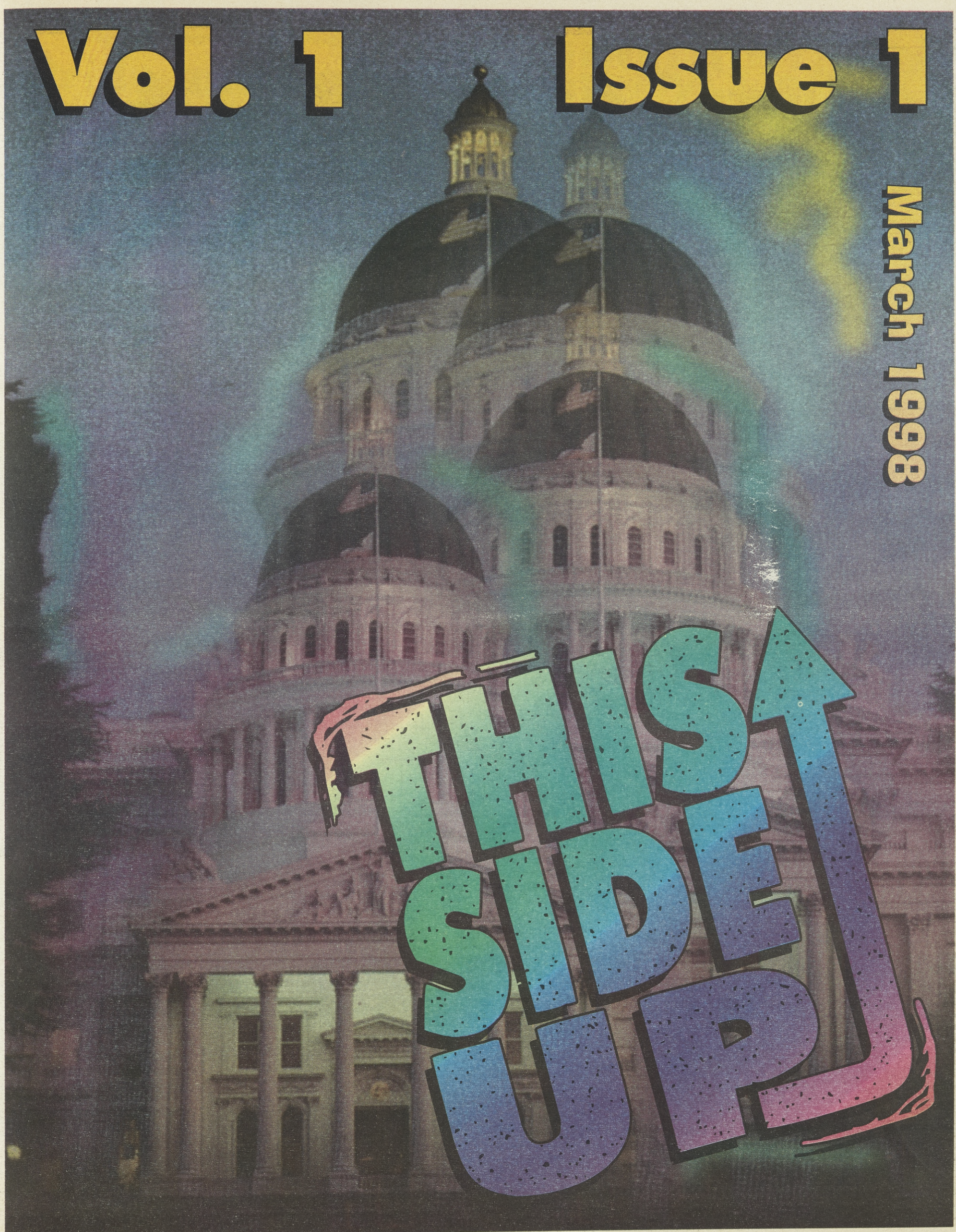
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March 1998
THIS SIDE UP!

THIS SIDE UP

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# Introducing... This Side UP Newspaper

By Jim Long and
*TSU* Publisher

Matthew Burlingame
*TSU* Production Editor

## A New Beginning...

A group of volunteers has formed a new organization to serve every citizen of the Sacramento Valley, the Sierra and surrounding Communities. That organization, called "Sacramento Publishing Group," is dedicated to the creation of multiple public forums, including community newspapers, Internet sanctuaries and other public spaces for citizen debate. These forums will be designed for the use and benefit of all; privilege and prestige will carry little weight. SPG's first major project is *This Side Up* newspaper...serious news for *Our Community*.

## Challenging the Status Quo...

You will notice *This Side Up* uses the term, *"Our Community,"* as a substitute to LGBT and similar labels. Although we respect the history represented by this term, we reject its use outright for several important reasons. First, it is presumptuous for any newspaper, any *Community* leader, or anyone else to define the membership of a community in which even its members disagree. Second, the boundaries of *Our Community* are continually in flux, and they have been for years. A stagnant listing of identifiable groups cannot adequately "define" a community such as ours for long. While we do not now challenge the original rationale for establishing such standard terminology, we strongly feel that *Our Community* has outgrown many of these terms. Our readers can decide for themselves if they are members of *"Our Community."*

This policy regarding terminology, however, reflects our broader publishing philosophy; we will not remain constrained by outdated beliefs or political strategies nurtured in *Our Community*. We will never assume the majority view is probably the "correct" view. This *Community* newspaper will not inform our readers what they must think and how they ought to characterize themselves, our role is merely to inform and focus information for readers to draw their own conclusions. We will challenge, provoke, argue, irritate, and advocate, but our primary goal is to serve our readers.

## The Strength of Many Voices...

The mission for *This Side Up* newspaper is to create a broad forum and encourage dialog within *Our Community*. Our publisher, editors, and writers have no monopoly on experience or wisdom. We will aggressively solicit input from our readers and distinguished leaders in *Our Community*. Many well-known and respected leaders from *Our Community* have now stepped forward to serve at *This Side Up*.

## Disregarding Stereotypes...

Members of *Our Community* are burdened by numerous stereotypes; we will strive to publicly challenge them all in *This Side Up*.

First and foremost, we reject the stereotype that any free publication for *Our Community* must emphasize sex throughout its pages. We have been called foolish (and worse) by many, but we will base our product on exactly the opposite premise. We assert that emphasizing gratuitous sex will detract from, rather than enhance, reader interest. We are not "anti-sex," but a newspaper cannot challenge stereotypes while simultaneously feeding into them.

## The Overlooked and Often Misunderstood...

We feature sections dedicated to two severely under-served segments of *Our Community:* the Transgendered and the Youth. Most newspapers in our market run stories infrequently involving some transgendered or youth theme, but few work to consistently serve these communities. We, frankly, find it unconscionable that any *Community* newspaper would fail to actively serve their local Youth Community. Furthermore, the under-served and regularly rebuked Transgendered Community may reflect another problem. Does *Our Community* treat members of the Transgendered Community with the dignity they deserve? Is the Transgendered Community in less need for newspaper coverage than other segments of *Our Community?* Disturbing questions, perhaps, but we will diligently pursue plausible answers in *This Side Up's Transgender* and *Youth* Pages.

*This Side Up* will tackle religion and spirituality head-on. The *Religion and Spirituality* Page is based on the assumption that everyone needs, and indeed seeks, spirituality at some level. Some do it with Jesus, others with the stars, still others with logical disbelief. All are fair game, and all will be examined on *This Side Up's Religion and Spirituality* page. With great pride and gratitude, *This Side Up* features a monthly column by Rev. Freda Smith, Senior Pastor, River City Metropolitan Community Church. Both Rev. Freda and all *This Side Up* staff hope to provide in this monthly column a safe place for private religious and spiritual exploration.

We are also fortunate to have formed a collaboration with the Editor and staff at *Our Families Magazine*. Together, we hope to dispel the image that competing businesses within *Our Community* cannot work together. We would like to thank Christina Fonseca and Donna Cephas for their generous support.

## Coming Soon...

Within the next few issues, we will launch several new and innovative pages. We will begin a *Region* section to serve *Our Community* residing in smaller towns throughout Northern California and Nevada, particularly those unserved or under-served by other *Community* publications.

Another addition will be *In Sync*, our music page. It will reach far beyond the norm to explore music from every part of the globe. Interviews with regional as well as global artists; a comprehensive guide to the newest releases, and in the spring we will bring you reviews from the Sacramento Blues Festival to the Bluegrass Jamboree in North Carolina -- wherever there is a beat we will follow it.

With the help of local sports fans, we will feature a regular *Sports* page. We will endeavor to break through the stereotypical myth that the only gay sport is women's golf. We hope, as spring approaches, to encourage *Our Community's* businesses and social groups to be active in friendly sports competitions.

We will also feature a regular travel page. Want some adventure on a limited budget? Can't get away for more than a day? Don't worry, our travel page, *Roadtrips and Expeditions,* will focus mainly on those lush paradises and historical jewels in our own backyard. But, if you're among the jetset, you won't feel abandoned as we explore Mardi Gras in Australia or the volcanos of Hawaii.

We will also introduce a major spread on politics and government. While we will report on the happenings around the world that affect the *global Community*, our primary focus will be of the laws and political movements that are affecting *Our Community*.

We will also bring you an *Arts* page featuring the finest in local exhibits, symphony, opera, theatre and galleries. We will provide a comprehensive listing of showings, artists and times.

## Putting Theories Into Practice...

While it is one thing to serve as a forum to promote change, it is another to actively create change. We do not intend to stand idle, simply reporting on the changes within *Our Community*. We intend to be at the forefront doing whatever we can to serve and participate in constructive change within *Our Community*.

We have offered assistance during the recent changes at the Lambda Community Center. The Youth Group now meets Friday evenings in our offices, and we are temporarily storing surplus materials from the Jayne Rountree Library. We have also offered to store and protect the LCC Memorial Wall until a permanent location can be found.

These are relatively small gestures to many, but to those who are involved in *Our Community* and those whose lives these matters touch, it may be the difference between hope and desolation.

We look forward to hearing from you and encourage you to participate in a continuing dialog within the pages of *This Side Up* newspaper.

***Thank you.***

**TSU...**

# Pride and Perceptions: The Man Behind Breaking Barriers

By Matthew Burlingame
***TSU* Production Editor**

In 1995, John Rambo, accepted the position of Director of the MCC's newly formed Breaking Barriers project. In the past three years, Rambo has headed a team of dedicated volunteers that has made Breaking Barriers Sacramento's top source of volunteer support for HIV/AIDS services.

Yet, there is more to Rambo than the success of his program. Inside lurks an activist and a realist unafraid to speak his mind. Below, Rambo talks about HIV, gay pride and the forces that drive him to break barriers.

Q. Above all, what does Breaking Barriers need the most now?

A. We need volunteers. Volunteers who are available during the work day. And I'm kind of distressed by the lack of action in Our Community and in the Sacramento Community-at-large. I have lots of people tell me their lives aren't fulfilling; they wish there was something more they could do. They go to work everyday from 9 to 5 and then they come home and they go to bed. And that's the extent of it.

And there's more for people to do. For example, working here as a volunteer could take as little as 20 to 30 minutes out of a week to do one thing. That makes a big difference to us, it makes a big difference to them and it doesn't take a lot of someone's time.

***Q. Why do you think there's such a recent lack in volunteers?***

A. I'm not sure whether it's that AIDS is losing it's focus because the press is saying that all these new treatments are here and that people are living longer. It's [now] showing statistically that AIDS is no longer the number one cause of death for men aged 25 to 44, it's moved to number two.

***Q. Are you saying that less people are becoming infected with HIV?***

A. No, not at all. What I mean is that fewer people who are infected are advancing into full blown AIDS, but that's because of the new treatments.

***Q. You've expressed concerns before over people mistaking the new treatments for cures. Do you hold any faith in the cocktails?***

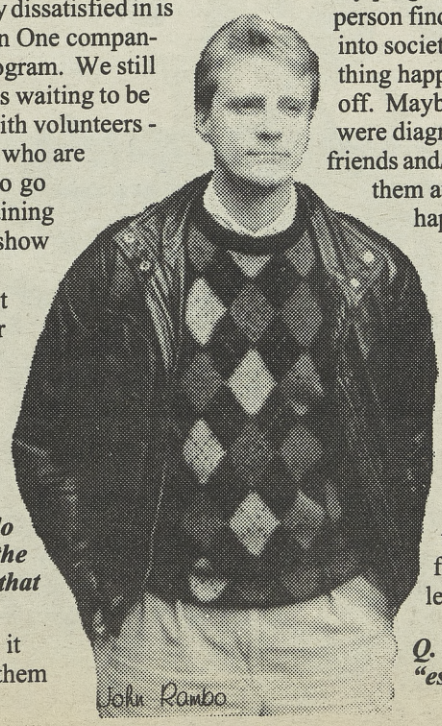
A. I'm a skeptic. I don't want to take the hope away from people who are using the treatments and who are experiencing a turn-around in their lives, but I know a number of people for whom that's not the case. They worked for a while and now over the long term, between the side affects and the decreasing effectiveness [the treatments] are not doing as well as they used to. [For some] it's keeping it at bay, but it's not a cure.

***Q. Yet so many do think of the cocktails as a cure. Why?***

A. I think that has a lot to do with the way the media has represented it as being one. There's a lot being done about education to keep people from getting [HIV], but because of the way it's represented, people think "oh, well, if I get it, I'll take these pills and I'll be fine."

People don't understand right now that the world - people with HIV and AIDS - it's all one big laboratory. They are still studying this and seeing how it's going to work and they don't KNOW how it's going to work in the long term. So far, the best treatment possible is to not get it in the first place. In the meantime, there are people that still need our help and with the lack of volunteers, that's hard to provide - they are the driving force behind Breaking Barriers.

One volunteer program I'm particularly dissatisfied in is our One On One companionship program. We still have clients waiting to be matched with volunteers - volunteers who are supposed to go through training and never show up. They either don't schedule or they schedule and then never attend.


John Rambo

***Q. What do you think the reason for that is?***

A. I think it may scare them in that with the new treatments, they're now looking at an indefinite commitment. It used to be that if you got into volunteering like that - and I used to do that for Sacramento AIDS Foundation for a short time - you were looking at a few months to a couple of years, even if someone was doing particularly well. It was relatively a finite commitment. That person was eventually going to die [within those few years]. Now, we don't know.

***Q. What's the main purpose of the One to One program?***

A. It's not so much holding someone's hand while their dying, but helping them, especially those who haven't developed into full blown AIDS, to get reconnected to life. Something has happened in this person's life that has left them without companionship. They have no family and no friends - or else those that do have people in their life, aren't getting what they need from them. So what we try to do in the One on One program is discover what it is that's missing and help them find it.

I think people come into the program expecting that real friendships are going to develop - that they're going to meet somebody and they're really going to hit it off. It does happen, but not all that often. It's great when it does happen, but more frequently, you're doing a job that needs to be done and this program is a way of doing it.

It's sort of like sponsorship in a recovery program. It's helping a person find their way back into society when something happened to cut them off. Maybe when they were diagnosed their friends and/or family pushed them away. That happens. I see it all too often. Not so much with family, but with friends - especially within Our Community. When they get the diagnoses of HIV or AIDS, they start hearing from their friends less and less.

***Q. Why do you say "especially within Our Community"?***

A. Sometimes I think, as a gay man, when our friends come up positive or are diagnosed...one of my closest friends was diagnosed as HIV+ a year ago. It was devastating. We still haven't really talked about it because I'm afraid to bring it up. I don't want to bring him down or make him talk about something that he's not comfortable with but at the same time I want to be there to support him.

It's kind of this unspoken thing that's in the way between us and I can see how that can hamper friendships. Also Guilt. There's a certain amount of survivor's guilt.

***Q. Is that what compels you to do this?***

A. Yes, I think so. AIDS was just coming into the public's perception at the same time I came out. There was a lot of fear then. I was living in Colorado and information was filtering in slowly from the coast. It wasn't clear what the disease was, what the symptoms were - you didn't even know where you got it from - all we knew was that gay men died from it.

We didn't know that it was sexually transmitted, just that we needed to stop [the disease] FAST! I actually didn't even consider that it was transmitted sexually so I didn't consider practicing safe sex until about six years ago. During all that time, my friends and I were doing the same thing. We were having unprotected sex with multiple partners.

I was living in Colorado, too, and at the time I left there in 1988, we still had less than 100 people in the whole state who we knew had HIV. I can't even go back to Colorado now. It's like a grave yard. All my friends are either dead or dying. And I was right there with them, less promiscuous than some, more promiscuous than others, but I didn't get it.

Yeah, I think [survivor's guilt] is definitely part of what drives me. I'm...trying to make up for it and trying to make up for...I know that I have sometimes...not pushed friends away that have AIDS, but I know that I've had less contact with them. That was back then and I can't make up for that - I can't change that.

***Q. You once made the comment that HIV and AIDS should not be the number one concern for the men in Our Community. Do you think that our perceptions need to be seriously addressed and changed in that respect?***

A. Well, like you said [in an earlier conversation], you've never known a time without AIDS. I'm 35 and although it was brief, I did [know a time without AIDS].

I think [the epidemic] has become seriously connected to our identity and I think it's detrimental in that it tells young gay men who are just coming out that this is going to be part of their life and eventually they are going to get HIV - that they can't avoid it. Or that they can avoid it, but that it's too difficult. That's not very positive or life affirming to have that kind of mind set - not to recognize all the other things that can go along with being gay. You DON'T have to get HIV [to be gay]...you have to be gorgeous and talented though (he laughs).

***Q. Do you think that's a real perception in Our Community?***

A. Yes and it's another real problem. There was a recent editorial in Frontiers Magazine about it. The editor was whining about finding some sort of dance card outside a local club and there was a naked man on it. She was saying that the card was sending the message to the rest of America that gay men in San Francisco were all about sex. I thought the article itself was hypocritical considering the structure and content of the magazine.

But, being hung up on physical accoutrements is a problem we have in our society as a whole - it's not just in Our Community.

***Q. In a recent issue of Our Families, there was an editorial condemning the sexual exhibitionism at San Francisco's Gay Pride Parade. The gist of the article was that it was an embarrassment to Our Community. Would you agree?***

A. I don't think it's an embarrassment because when you watch the parade, you're going to pick out whatever you want to pick out. In addition to the leather men who are walking around with everything exposed and the women who are there with no shirts on or less, there are also

***Continued page 21***

## We couldn't have done it without you...

*In June of 1997, a dream began to take shape. A dream of a forum that would reflect the diversity of Our Community and help to serve as a vehicle for positive change. In October of that same year, the Sacramento Publishing Group opened its doors across from the old Lambda Community Center and began building a team of dedicated volunteers and Community leaders who shared the same vision. Now, five months later, the Sacramento Publishing Group is releasing its first publication: This Side Up.*

*Already TSU has received a tremendous amount of support within Our Community. When explaining our mission, speaking with the Community and asking for the input of vital Community resources, again and again people have stood up to offer their help and support for this fledgling publication.*

*We would like to take a moment to thank the many who have helped in the initial start up process of this publication. Without you, this would not have been possible.*

*Thank you,*

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# Sacrificial Lambda

By Michael R. Gorman
TSU Writer/Columnist

It has been with mixed feelings that I have followed the press accounts of the troubles at the Lambda Community Center. For the past decade I have supported the center in print, in fundraising, and in sweat. I have always felt immense pride that I came out of the closet into a city that had such a place, a place that found its purpose in nurturing people like me. I have cherished memories of working at the freedom fair, reading poetry at the Friday night cafe, dancing on 20th street after a protest march to the music boomed from the center's porch, sitting and talking with other gay fathers trying like me to find their balance in the middle ground between two worlds. There were many, many days when I would go out of my way to drive down L Street just so that I could read again the sign that said, "gay and lesbian community center." Like so many of us in Sacramento, I have a history with the center. Now it's very existence is threatened. Why?

This is not the first time that the Lambda Community Center has found itself on the edge of the financial precipice, though its current money problems may be the most severe in its history. Some in town are ready to start speaking of the center in the past tense. Unlike past periods of crisis, this time the dirty laundry charges of mishandled funds are no longer just the fuel for intra-community gossip and hand-wringing. Ironically, it is a testament to the vision of the founders of the center that *Our Community* has gained such acceptance in Sacramento that our central institution's woes have been the subject of several lengthy articles in the mainstream Sacramento Bee. As with past moments of crisis at the LCC, the solution proffered, redundantly, by those closely involved with the center's management goes something like this: if there is financial irresponsibility, the culprit needs to be found and dismissed, and then we can appeal urgently to our supporters for financial help while forming a committee to deal with the community's apathy toward the center's mission. Yes, the final two elements are contradictory, but that's beside the point.

Dismiss him or her, ask them, motivate them, make them get involved...; the status quo at the center-in-crisis reminds me of my brother who sank bitterly into a life-long addiction to "speed." He had a litany of "thems" to blame for his difficulties: the politicians, the military brass in Vietnam, the cops, lawyers, his parents, the "asshole down the street".... I never remember my brother ever taking a hard look at his own culpability in his life, his own responsibility for his circumstances. His finger pointing attitude freed him from ever changing his comfortable, habitual

*Continued Page 5*


Party at the Mirage
Under New Management as of March 15, 1998
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*This Side Up* newspaper Publisher and staff will be available at The Mirage the fourth Wednesday of each month between 7:00 and 9:00 pm to solicit your input on the newspaper or important issues affecting *Our Community*.

*"Sacrificial Lambda"*
*Continued from page 4*

ways of dealing with the world. It has been said that insanity is repeating the exact same action over and over again, each time expecting a different outcome.

I cannot be the only person in Sacramento experiencing deja vu when I listen to center supporters decry the lack of help, the lack of participation, the lack of support, the lack of generous giving. I don't hear anyone talking about the men and women who have repeatedly run to the center's side to stack the sandbags and run the pumps over the years even when the center offers them little in return but a testament to their own altruistic optimism.

Too often the center is like one of those friends who will take all the love and support you have to offer until you stand completely drained, and then will pout and blame you for not giving more. The person who has the courage to walk away from such a relationship usually does so with a great deal of residual guilt. We somehow believe that non-profit organizations should work that way. It is the nature of the beast to take whatever people have to offer and then ask for more. How else can the programs continue? Besides, it's the volunteer's civic duty to support such institutions. Doing good is its own reward.

To some degree that is true, but when the people doing the work can no longer see the vision, can no longer witness the good being done, then there is no spiritual reward. That, I believe, is a chronic problem for the Lambda Community Center. In recent years the two most healthy programs have been the AIDS program and the Youth program. The Youth meetings are closed, as they should be. The AIDS work involves a great deal of confidentiality between client and server. And the third priority project at the center, fundraising — well, no one wants to talk about budgets and grants to the community at large. So where does that leave the volunteers who are expected to give more? The center says, "Give us more of your time and energy, and as for the results, well, that's a secret."

The more the voice of the Lambda Center becomes a resounding "Give me!" the less likely it is that people will give. At times in its history the center's voice has instead said, "Tell us what you need and we will do our best to see that it happens, and maybe then you can give a little back." In those times, people have responded. The center recently has been less the loving parent and more the finger wagging preacher passing the plate.

There are pressing needs in the Sacramento community that the center should be addressing, but most of its recent leaders say they will get to those needs as soon as the money comes in. I was told that the reason no one returned my phone calls after I was the victim of a hate crime was that there were not funds "to have someone sit around and answer the phone all day long." (There were, apparently, funds to pay a salary to someone to write grant proposals.) Yet no matter how large the budget grows, the story never changes. The grants and fund raisers become the focus, and the day when there is enough money never comes. The time for addressing the needs of the average gay man or lesbian or bisexual or transgender person never comes.

And the argument itself is a bogus one. To cite one example: there are twelve-step groups of various kinds all over the city that are doing miraculous healing work with no budgets at all, just groups of people determined to come together and focus on the needs of those assembled. They keep coming together and keep giving of their time and energy, and sometimes a bit of coffee money, because the work itself is tangible, real, ongoing, and concretely productive. It is a model that we would do well to emulate. Money is not bad, but neither is it synonymous with service. Where it should be a tool, it has become the end goal. Frankly, it is a goal unworthy of my sweat and involvement.

When all of the Board meetings and committee reports and gossip and opinion pieces and speculation are distilled down to their most basic elements, there are two facts about community-based organizations which remain always true. Those organizations which focus their energy on the people and meet their needs and address their dreams thrive. Those organizations which fail to do so, whether out of caution or pursuit of prestige or lust for the next grant, whither and die.

Despite the virulent homophobia in certain segments of our city and state, there are no great enemies besieging the Lambda Community Center. The fundamentalists have not driven the community into hiding or robbed us of monetary opportunities. No one has burned our buildings. The bad guys aren't on our center's doorstep sabotaging activities. No snipers have dispersed the crowds at our fund raisers. The problem lies within the center, and single-mindedly repeating the blame-based damage control of the past will not bring a solution into the light, and if the center does so yet again and yet again manages to thinly survive, will anything change?

Only when those running the center can admit that it is no longer addressing the needs of the people, and must make a pro-active commitment to doing so rather than wasting time pointing fingers, will we ever again have a vital social center for *Our Community*. I do not want to see Sacramento without a Community center, but realistically, that has been the case for some time now.

Is there a solution to this pattern of status quo followed by crisis that the center seems to have become mired in for years? Can the Lambda Community Center be revived in a way that will allow it to prosper rather than struggle? Should it be saved, or should it be allowed to die a natural death?

I do not pretend to have the answers, but I do know that the center does not need another patch job; it needs a rebirth. It must begin again with a fundamental change of focus. The center and its leaders and its volunteers must truly understand that its success rests on their willingness to put people first: people — individual members of *Our Community*. They must take priority over grants and budgets and programs and fund raisers and planning meetings. People alone should be the reason the Lambda Community Center exists. All the rest of the details of the operation must function as tools to touch people or they have no purpose, no meaning, no reason to expect support. Paper work and political prestige and conference rooms and Board meetings don't change lives or create healing. Arms willing to hug do. Patient smiles do. Shoulders to cry on do. Soft words of wisdom do. Ears that listen without judgment do. Hands that touch with compassion do. Eyes do. People touching people.

If there is a ten thousand dollar grant to write and a homeless, teenage lesbian who is unsure where to turn shows up at the door, there should be absolutely no question which situation deserves priority treatment. If the paperwork piles up and a mother calls needing to talk to someone about her son's coming out, the forms and files should wait. If a young woman or a confused mother, or a frightened victim of homophobia is ever turned away from the center's doors for the sake of business or money or schedules or lack of designated programs, then the center has lost its soul and nothing it does has any meaning any more. On the other hand, I believe with all my heart that if the Lambda Community Center revives and begins to truly put people first, uncompromisingly, the mechanisms needed to do the work of serving the people will fall into place. It can't hurt to try.

In short, the Lambda Community Center must reawaken with a vow to always, always, answer the phone.

**TSU...**

***Michael Gorman is a local writer and journalist chosen the "Poet Laureate of Lavender Heights" at the first Lambda Freedom Fair poetry contest. His biography of gay activist Jose Sarria is due out in April from Haworth Press.***

**THIS SIDE UP**

*So you have an idea for an artical, story or letter? Call us (916) 443-4437, or come to one of our meetings at either The Mirage or Capitol Garage Coffee Co. (details are in their ads) and let us know.*

**MAYBE YOU TOO, CAN BE AN EDITOR!**

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# Youth...Breaking The Silence

Youth Editors
Steve Williams and
Anny Gateley

By Anny Gateley and Felicia Tafoya
*TSU* Youth Editor — *TSU* Contributing Writer

Do you ever notice that *Our Community's* youth get ignored by both society and the media? It seems like whenever a young person attempts to make a statement, comment, or express an opinion about an issue that's important to them, the world all of a sudden has selective hearing. Furthermore, when the media does print or report a story concerning youth, most of the time there's a negative twist; youth often appear incompetent in the eyes of society. The youth of *Our Community* are desperately in need of a voice within the Sacramento area, so if you are a young person and feel like you have no place to speak your mind; then please continue to read on, because this page is for *youth,* about *youth* and by *youth.*

It is our hope that the *Youth* page will encompass a variety of components including resources to hotlines, HIV/AIDS helplines and testing centers, and of course articles on different issues and concerns we must face in our daily life. These include suicide, coming out, peer pressure, conformity, family acceptance, societal acceptance, religious conflicts, siblings, etc. We'll focus on issues "normal" to growing up and those that are strictly related to being a young adult in *Our Community.*

In addition to the above objectives, we would like the *Youth* page to reflect you. We know there are many talented writers, artists and photographers in *Our Community,* and we want their input. Here is your opportunity to express yourself through essays, poetry, drawings, short stories, etc. We would also like to provide information on Pride Scholarships and gay-friendly colleges. We would like to encourage activism -- there's a lot that can be done out there, but communication is the key.

Youth need to know what is going on, both in the community-at-large and within their own circles. We also would very much like the adult community to know what we youth are up to. We, as youth, do exist, and we would like nothing more than to be validated and included by *Our Community.*

TSU...

# A Letter from Queer Youth

***To the Adults of Our Community,***

***You don't know me...or maybe you do. I am queer youth. I am every age, race, class and religion. I am your neighbor, your student, your relative, a member of your church, or just someone you notice around town. I am everywhere, and I need your help.***

***I am living in an often inhospitable world of homophobia, fear, abuse, and confusion. I am often depressed and I am two to three times more likely to commit suicide than other teens. (More than half of Our Community's youth report periods of extreme anxiety and depression.) In order to succeed and live a healthy life, I need your support. I need recognition, validation and understanding; and I need role models. I have few people to look up to. I have no peer role models in the media and few adult ones. Who besides you can show me that I am okay; that what I am feeling is not wrong? I need you to help me live.***

***It is easy for you to help me. You can do so many things, as simple or as complex as you would like. You can volunteer your time with a youth group or support line, you can lend financial support to programs that support me. But the best thing you can do is just be there. Be visible, and be available to talk to. Or even just give me a friendly smile as you pass me in the halls at school, or on the street. If you are there for me, I will be eternally grateful, and you may even save my life.***

***So to all of you whom I know, and yes, I do know you are there, please help me. Please validate my existence, please show me that I am okay. I need you, and you just may enjoy helping me.***

***With love and hope,***

***Queer Youth***

# Apathetic Youth? Think Again...

By Anny Gateley
*TSU* Youth Editor

I recently read an article in the *Sacramento Bee* (Metro section, November 23, 1997) about the lack of political activism among Sacramento's gays and lesbians. Although I do agree that Sacramento has a dying activist community, a statement was made by Joe Lenihan, the former President of the Lambda Center, that angered me. He said "There's a whole generation coming along that really doesn't understand the struggle. These kids are identifying with their sexuality much earlier so they don't have the same pressing need that many of us have to be active and involved." The paper also stated that ". . .veterans worry that younger gays and lesbians are growing up unaware of their history in America and less willing to take up the cause."

I, as a member of that new generation of gays and lesbians, find that statement incredibly erroneous, and unfounded. My generation of gays and lesbians is arguably more active than the previous generation(s) ever were, *because* we're starting younger. The issues haven't disappeared, but they are different than the ones facing adults. There are plenty of active youth, and, now, not all youth fighting for gay issues are themselves gay.

Not long ago, I attended a JSA (Junior State of America) convention in Santa Clara with twelve hundred politically active youth. One of the biggest issues of the weekend was a debate stating: "Resolved, that gay marriage be legalized and recognized in all states." When I went into the debate, I expected it to be a heated discussion about the morality of gay marriage. I was wrong. The majority of the debate was actually between domestic partnership with all the benefits of marriage, and the actual state of marriage. Student after student got up to discuss the issues facing gays and lesbians, and what could be done to resolve them, including the issues and solutions revolving around the topic of marriage (a topic other generations were not ready to deal with). The resolution passed, 90 to 17, with only seven abstentions. Chatter amongst the crowd, a good number of whom were gay/lesbian, was focused on being an active member of *Our Community*, and what we as youth face.

Sacramento has its own share of activism among youth. For starters, there is LIFE Lobby's Queer Youth Lobby Day. Where else besides Sacramento can hundreds of *Our Community's* youth bombard the State Capitol, talking about issues, writing letters, and lobbying politicians for our rights? The visibility of the event alone is a form of activism -- any visibility among gay youth is activism, just as it is with adults. Being "out" is a way of showing people that *Our Community's* youth do have a voice. When a gay student brings a same-sex date to a school dance -- that is activism. When a school starts a gay/straight alliance -- that is activism. When even a single youth writes a letter to their representative -- that is activism.

Youth activism is even more visible on the Internet. An organization called *Incite!* (www.incite.org) provides a (very loud) voice for web activism. It contains articles about bills coming into the state and national legislatures that concern *Our Community's* youth, events for youth to attend where they can voice their opinions, links to web pages maintained by organizations like LYRIC, *Our Community's* youth themselves, and even links to major (anti-gay) "Christian" organizations, because "you can't beat 'em if you don't know what they're up to." Youth can even find out who their local representatives are, so they can contact them. Another web resource is PlanetOut (www.PlanetOut.com), where the "Youth State" section is devoted to youth, and being active in *Our Community*. The chat group's discussions spend more time on activism than any other subject, and the group is frequented by a number of incredibly active young adults.

To state that queer youth are not active and do not face the same issues as our predecessors is false. We are active, and we are devoted to the causes that affect us the most. We have made ourselves visible, in school and in *Our Community;* we have fought to make school a safe place, testifying in front of our legislators about the abuse we have received, starting clubs at schools, and have generally been "Young, Loud, and Proud" as the title of a recent conference stated. We are out there, and we *do* have something to say.

TSU...

# 'Family' Is What We Make of It

By Christina Fonseca
*TSU* Family Editor

Family.... What image comes to mind when you hear that word? Who do you think of...your mother, father, partner, wife, husband, grandmother, grandfather, children, uncle, aunt, cousin, or maybe you think of a few very close, special friends?

I bet if I asked a group of fifteen people to define what "family" means to each of them, I would get fifteen completely different answers.

Each of us carries a different image of what "family" means. That especially rings true in *Our Community*. Many members of *Our Community* don't have the nuclear family to fall back on because of fear, shame or, in many cases, anger that unfortunately surfaces as we come out to our relatives.

It is our hope on the *Family* page, to focus on the many different images of "families" that are ever present in *Our Community*. We hope to examine the many issues surrounding the family unit -- regardless of how that unit is defined or those it includes.

We would like this page to not only be an educational experience, but also a celebration of our lives and the people that we love.

Some of you may recognize me as Editor and creator of *Our Families Magazine*, a bi-monthly publication that serves gay and lesbian parents and their children.

I believe very deeply in fostering and, when needed, mending the family unit. And because of that belief, I have volunteered to work as a team with the editors at *This Side Up*.

We have all agreed it is time the "gay media" in the Sacramento area show *Our Community* that there can, indeed, be collaboration in the pursuit of a common goal -- and that goal is to bring all facets of *Our Community* together to support one another.

My personal goal is to create a close-knit community in which the members are not afraid to greet each other openly or at least acknowledge each other with a slight nod of the head and a friendly hello.

After living in Sacramento for the past three years, I have been very disappointed in *Our Community*. I guess I expected living here to feel like having a "family" (there's that word again).

I moved from a location where there were virtually no other gays or lesbians (that I knew of) to the thriving community in the state's capital, where even elected officials are out. And yet, in Sacramento, there seems to be a huge lack of personal connection.

We would like to encourage you to challenge the narrow traditional view of "family" and to debate and discuss how *Our Community* can begin truly working toward becoming a "family." We ask you to use *This Side Up* and *Our Families Magazine* to be your voice and the voice of *Our Community*.

**TSU...**

***Christina Fonseca is Founder and Editor or Our Families Magazine, a free newspaper targeting members of Our Community with children. She can be reached through This Side Up newspaper or via email at rfamilys@pacbell.net.***

# We-R-Family

By Dan Uhrich
*TSU* Writer/Columnist

During the recent holidays, many of us in the "gay family" were again subjected to the awkward questioning by our extended family members about all of our personal matters. We are often forced to explain over and again why, for instance, at age 40 we are not "married" with 2.3 children and "settled and stable." With this foremost in my mind, I decided to write my first column on gay/lesbian couples and our extended families. Hopefully, I can enumerate some clues and reminders of appropriate responses and retorts when mom and grandma get awkward on us.

I am very fortunate, as are many of you, to be in a long term, monogamous relationship with the partner of my dreams that is totally open, honest, and *out* to all of our family and friends. I am also very fortunate that both our large loving families accept us for the individuals and the couple (or family) that we are. Notice here that I purposefully used the word "accept" and not "approve," as this is an extremely important concept when trying to explain sexual orientation and/or relationships to family members. We can always ask for and expect acceptance. We have no control over their approval; as this is a value judgement, and we have no right to try to change one's sense of value. In turn, "they" should not try to change you either! Years ago, I gave my mother a wall-hanging which helped to explain this phenomenon to her. It read: *"Accept your children for who they are; not for what you expect them to be."* She keeps it hung on her office wall to this day, and even though I know she wishes down deep inside that I were "married to a woman," she keeps this sentiment inside and has really tried to "accept" me and my better-half and our relationship.

We recently visited my "other-half's" extended family in the Chicago area. We enjoy being with them because we are truly accepted as a couple -- a family -- and I am treated with love and respect as a "son-in-law" -- just as his older brother and sisters' mates are accepted and treated. This is significant to me as I love his family very much and especially enjoy spending time with his grandmother, as both of mine have passed on already.

Anyway, what am I really trying to communicate here? I believe that mankind's greatest need is to love and be loved. I am blessed to have found that expression and satisfaction in love with my immediate relationship (family), and also in my extended family; however, it has taken much practice, many hours of communication, and appropriately standing up for myself over the years. Hopefully, the following hints will help you on your own journey of love and fulfillment.

1. *If you are single, you are still a family and deserve love and respect from other extended family members. Respect and acceptance should not be based on marriage or relationship status.*
2. *It is important to be open and honest with family members* for your own peace and self respect. *If you love and respect yourself and your decisions, they will eventually respect you too. (Remember, not necessarily* approve, *but accept and respect).*
3. *If you are in a long-term, committed Domestic Partnership (which is ideally what marriage should be), it is important to have that conversation with family members in an open, honest way. Don't demand their approval, but explain to them that your partner is now your immediate family and thus takes priority over your extended family -- as in any "marriage".*
4. *If, not* when, *your loving extended family member makes those rude remarks or asks those inane questions, try a kind, yet honest response; something like: "Mom did you hear what you just said?" or, "Dad do you know how deeply that statement hurts?" It may just get them thinking.*

**TSU...**

***Dan Uhrich is a Therapist/Social Worker at Sacramento's Center for AIDS Research, Education and Service. He can be reached through This Side Up newspaper or CARES at (916) 443-3299.***

# Reflections

By Rick Zeek
*TSU* Contributing Writer

My Dad died today.... Sitting by his side, I told the nurse that it was okay that I didn't make it to the hospital on time. We had just talked yesterday when I visited him, mostly about football and the troubles with my vehicles. We knew how each other felt. We didn't need to say "I love you" all the time. That made me feel better.

My Dad died today....

The pastor stopped by and we talked. I told him that my Dad and I knew how each other felt, that it was okay that I didn't get to talk with him this morning.

My Dad knew that I loved him very much. And he loved me. But there were other things I thought I might tell him someday.

I would have told him how much I admired his integrity -- the way he lived his daily life. He was full of kindness, ready to drop everything to help someone. At times it seemed he was everyone's personal chauffeur.

I would have told him how much it meant to me when I witnessed him treating my Mom with the gentleness that only he could give. She cried today, remembering his touch.

I would have told him "thank you" for the freedom with which he let me live my life. He didn't question my decisions or motives, but was always there to advise me wherever I found myself. He knew I'd make up my own mind, but also knew I needed to bounce my ideas and options off him. He was concerned with my happiness and I knew that.

I would have told him how much I liked being me and thanked him for helping me to be that person.

I would have told him how much I would like to have a son to raise, possibly life's biggest challenge, but probably never would. And yes, I would have held up my Dad as a comparison, making the challenge that much more daunting.

***Continued page 21***

Our Families Magazine
is forming a
**PARENT SUPPORT GROUP**
in the Sacto area for gay and Lesbian families.
**Interested?**
**Call (916) 376-0503**
leave a message

# Meet Me At The Crossroads!

By Amazon Lee
*TSU* Crossroads Editor

I am pleased and excited to have been selected as Editor of *Crossroads* for *This Side Up*. *Crossroads* is a bit like me: eclectic, growing, changing, expanding, evolving, fighting, surviving and thriving. And although I have been afforded the privilege and pleasure of moving about the pieces of the puzzle, I by no means create each one by hand. We are not alone in *This Community*, nor do we exist in a vacuum. I strongly encourage and look forward to the contributions of all readers, regardless of your position or place on your personal journey in life.

So what will *Crossroads* consist of? What do we all consist of as people? How do you express yourself? Your growth? Your challenges, successes, setbacks, and joys? From where does your voice arise? What makes you, uniquely you? Not to get too Zen, but we open *Crossroads* to be as special, as quirky, as angry and loving, as bizarre and beautiful as we all are...or am I talking about myself again? As the Editor of *Crossroads,* I am very open to and encourage the full expression of all aspects of your personality, politics, arts, spirituality, choices, behaviors, and interests. *Crossroads* will be a place of safety and acceptance designed to explore and express ourselves as members of our very diverse community.

As a feminist counselor, I understand and endorse the importance of venting our fears, frustrations, and most of all, anger, in order to heal. In this challenging society, expressing feelings that are often discouraged or frowned upon is necessary in order to simply function on a day to day basis without exploding, or withdrawing into a world of hopelessness and depression. What others may consider as "bashing" must be expressed in order to work through the anger that is often lethal physically, mentally, and spiritually. Of course, there are limitations that must be honored...plotting to kill someone's pet flamingo in the name of personal growth and empowerment is not okay.

*Crossroads* invites the evidence of your experiences in life; poetry and verse of all varieties. Personally written stories or interviews about your struggles and growth. Songs you have written. Groups you have attended that have offered you support and strength. Counselors and therapists, healers and Shamyns, groovy workshops and presentations...whatever you now explore or are interested in exploring on the many planes of your existence on this planet...or maybe others! Yes, let's push the envelope here...reality is what you make it.

*"Dear Amazon"* is my advice column. In case you haven't gathered, I also strongly endorse humor as a healing tool. And although it is a good idea to be able to "laugh at ourselves," demeaning racist, sexist, classist, homophobic, lookist, ableist or any other degrading and demeaning "humor" is not welcome here. Please send in your questions for *"Dear Amazon"* and be assured I will attempt to answer them as a dedicated counselor, with an occasional dash of humor on the side.

So if your vision of *Crossroads* is more murky now than before you read my mission statement, my job is done. If I have raised a hackle or two, good deal. Send me an email...drop me a line. The only way we learn, grow and change is through a bit of cognitive activity, and sometimes the only way to stimulate that process is through controversy.

It won't be a dull ride, I do promise you that. So jump on! Buckle up and throw your hands in the air for the big plunges, or just stand and enjoy the turbulence during take off. You won't be the same again!

**TSU...**

***Amazon Lee holds a B.A. in Psychology and an Interdisciplinary Master of Arts degree in Women's Studies, Counseling & Education. She can be contacted via email at SactoPub@aol.com or by mail care of This Side Up newspaper.***

SACRAMENTO AIDS FOUNDATION

Heart to Heart

Support group for gay and bisexual men with HIV

FREE

Tuesdays: 6:30 - 8:00 pm

1330 21st Street, Ste. 100
Sacramento, CA 95814

(916) 448-2437, ext. 213
FAX: (916) 325-2478

## Dear Amazon...

*Dear Amazon,*
*My girlfriend and I split up three years ago, and now we are back together again. One of our past problems was that we became each other's social life with no outside friends except family. This time I have friends that I want to keep, and I want my girlfriend to meet them. How much interaction between the two factors is reasonable, because I want my girlfriend and friends to be comfortable with each other? I understand that I'm not going to force my girlfriend to go everywhere with me. Yet I don't want her to pout when we are all together.*
*Wanting a Social Life*

***Dear Social Life,***
***It sounds like you're aware that having a balanced social life that both involves your partner, and at times does not, is important for a healthy relationship. I also understand your concern in losing your current friendship base because your partner may not be as comfortable with your new friends as you are. Remember, you can make efforts to introduce all parties, and suggest gatherings or events where all can become acquainted; you can't however, teach your girlfriend how to become comfortable with new people. I would suggest to your girlfriend that she explore feelings around making new friends, and sharing your attention with them. She may consider a support group, or some counseling as she looks at this issue. Above all else, keep your new friends! Our partners should not be, nor should we expect them to be, the answer to all our empty spaces...the substance to fill in each hole! For those of you who don't understand the reference to our "holes"...we aren't talking donuts or sex here...***

»Amazon«

*Dear Amazon,*
*I work downtown and have recently become friends with a man that works across the street from my business. I have come to be very close with him, but am continuously receiving mixed signals from him. Neither of us are looking for a relationship, but I, at times, feel he may be interested in "fooling around." I am not. Should I confront him or just ignore it and hope it subsides?*
*Unsure*

***Dear Unsure,***
***First of all...is this man gay? Bicurious? Hetero? What are the signals...yellow light...red light..green light...walk...don't walk...railroad crossing????? Just checking. Unless he makes an oh-my-gosh-this-is-a-pass kind of pass, I wouldn't worry about confronting him. You may be mistaking a green light for a no free night on red sign...if you know what I mean. And I know you wouldn't be leading him on, now would you?! Just curious.***

»Amazon«

*Dear Amazon,*
*What's with all this sexual innuendo among gay men? I'm fairly new to the "gay scene" and, although at times I think it's cool, most of the time it gets old. Am I trying to have it both ways? Should I grow up and get over it?*
*Just Wondering*

***Dearest Wondering,***
***I'm assuming that by "sexual innuendo among gay men" you are referring to actions that may be interpreted as flirtatious and provocative. These behaviors may be due to the fact that as lesbian and gay folks, we are not validated or acknowledged in our affectional preferences and sexuality in general. Our lives are labeled devious and unacceptable by our culture-at-large. If we are in an environment where we can be ourselves; express all aspects of our personality including our sexuality, that can be a freeing and empowering experience! There are also those who enjoy the attention of others, and may solicit the attention in manipulative and/or untruthful ways. The fine art here is to learn to differentiate between those who are expressing themselves within Our Community; a safer place than heteropatriachy land...and those who are attention and control mongers. To learn this art is whole 'nother issue.***

»Amazon«

*Dear Amazon,*
*I'm a white man, and I don't consider myself a racist in any way. I find, however, that I'm not really sexually attracted to men of color. When I state that opinion, some people consider me prejudiced. That hurts. I simply know that my preference is for white men. I feel persecuted for my preferences. Do you think I'm worrying too much about what other people say?*
*Feeling Persecuted*

***Dear Persecuted***
***Get off the cross, we need the wood. Just kidding!!! I have dated folks of other races, and don't feel that the fact that you are not attracted to others of various races makes you prejudice or racist. There are many thoughts, actions, beliefs, decisions, and feelings that do make folks racist in this society...I don't think this is one of them. Unless, of course, you refuse to date someone who you enjoy, have fun with, etc., etc., simply because of the color of their skin...now that may be quite racist! Attraction to others may be attributed to many things. The fact that I am not attracted to men doesn't make me anti-hetero although I'm sure some goofy hetero might think otherwise.***

»Amazon«

*Dear Amazon,*
*I'm 27 and I only like to date older men. I would never consider a serious relationship with anyone my own age. My friends think this is odd. Do you agree?*
*Mature at Heart*

***Dear Mature at Heart***
***Exactly how much "older" are we talking about here? If someone is under the age of 18 and your "older" partner is over the age of 18...this is a very bad thing indeed, not to mention illegal. If you're 23 and your "older" man is 29, I wouldn't necessarily consider it an issue. I don't have a magic formula that sounds an alarm when one age is such-and-such years older than the first. I would ask you to ponder the questions...why are you attracted only to older men? Why aren't you attracted to men your own age? What is it that you feel you are getting from the May-December romances that you may not be getting from the May-June or even the May-August romances? Think, think, think...that's all I ever ask people to do. Keep pondering and let me know what you come up with.***

»Amazon«

**TSU...**

***Amazon Lee and This Side Up newspaper request and encourage your questions and comments. If you have a question specifically for the "Dear Amazon" column, please send your letters to: "Dear Amazon" c/o This Side Up newspaper. To email your questions, please specify "Dear Amazon" in the subject line of your email to SactoPub@aol.com.***

# Staying Alive

By K. R. Lapidus
*TSU* Health & Medicine Editor

Each of us is engaged in staying alive, staying healthy, putting off for as long as we can the hour of our death. The *Health and Medicine* page will explore as many aspects of this effort as the editor and writers can find. It is our intention to discuss everything from safe sex to alternative treatments for various diseases, from how *Our Community* uses the health care systems offered in the area to home birthing, from breast cancer to "saging", from HIV to Ebola virus.

The *Health and Medicine* page is intended to be informational and interactive. It will develop from suggestions, comments and questions from our readers. We want on-going dialogues, carried from issue to issue, on the topics which interest you.

HIV will be an important topic. We will be presenting information on the most current treatments, but we will also discuss whether the HIV epidemic has overshadowed other, very important health issues in *Our Community*. Or, has everyone gotten bored with HIV, especially now that there is a demographic shift from gay men to IV drug users and women? Is funding drying up? We will talk with HIV experts and focus on the institutions who serve those who have HIV. Dr. Scott Christensen will contribute a column exploring many aspects of HIV from a doctor's perspective and answering your questions.

So, you're not going to die today or tomorrow. Maybe not next week. Do you have to go back to work? What is a day in the life of an HIV+ person taking antiretrovirals like? How do you juggle pills you must take with food and pills you must take on an empty stomach with a work schedule? A play schedule? How do you cope with nausea and diarrhea and headaches and rashes that are common side effects? Once upon a time you planned on dying soon, then you planned on not dying, then your drugs failed...now what?

What is your definition of health? Are HIV+ individuals still stigmatized?

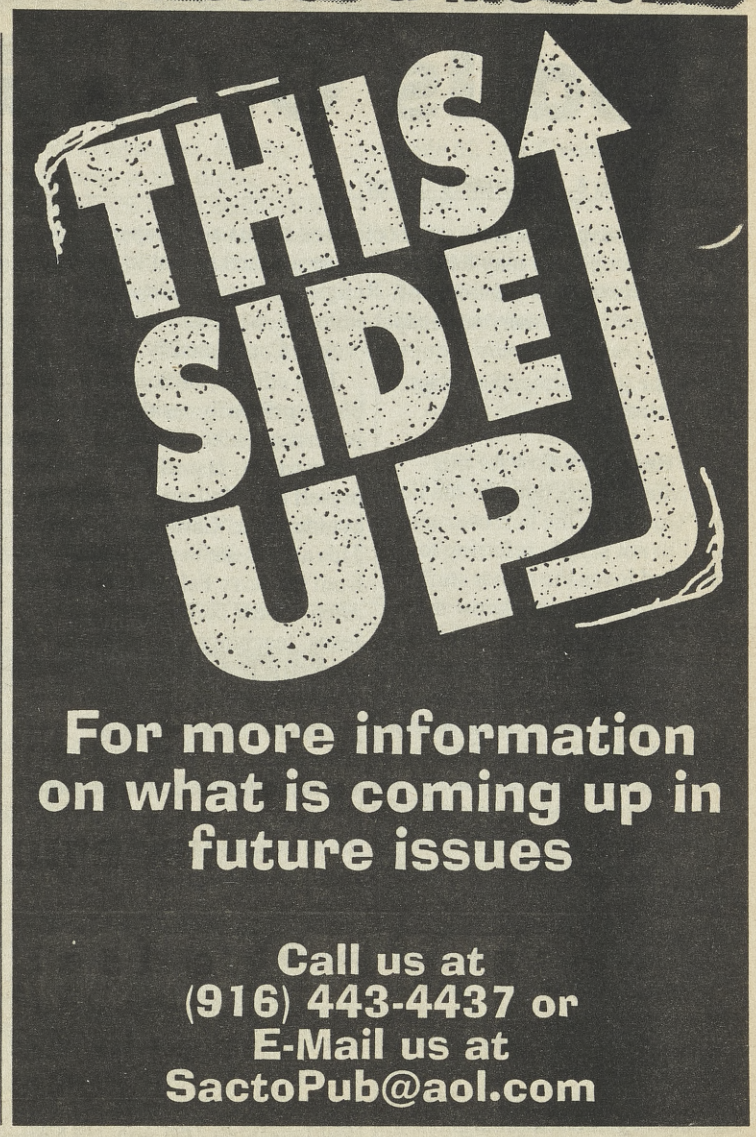
And in a broader scope, what is the definition of health within *Our Community*? Does it mean being HIV negative? Does it mean staying alive with HIV? Is it being free of colds, cancer, ulcers, herpes? Does the Definition of health include mental well-being as a component? Spiritual fulfillment? What role does sex play in health?

The economics of health care is another topic we will dissect. What do you get for your health dollar? Is there a two or three tiered system in the Sacramento Valley? How is health care really paid for? Do HIV+ individuals get too large a share of resources?

We intend to be controversial and at some times confrontational. Without being didactic, we plan to teach, and to learn.

Above all, we want to be responsive to the readers' needs for accurate information and thought provoking articles. We want to be a forum for questions and comments about health and medicine and in this way establish a dialogue for open and honest communication.

**TSU...**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Finally!

A Parents Magazine for Our Community

Our Families Magazine

# God Is Out, Get Used To It

By Jim Long
*TSU* Religion & Spirituality Editor

Don't expect God to remain closeted in this newspaper, even though you may have grown accustomed to that in other *Community* publications. Religion and spirituality are subjects that make many newspaper editors -- especially those targeting *Our Community* -- quite nervous. Consequently, many ignore the topic altogether. Not so at *This Side Up*.

The Religion Editor for this newspaper rejects outright the lie that "God hates the homosexual." And I'm not simply referring to that "God loves the sinner stuff," even though believers know that's true. The concept of "God" is many things to many people, and we'll endeavor to explore them all in this forum. But, perhaps above all else, for this Religion Editor, God is the Lover of the Loving. So, please, try leaving your self-loathing at the door, and come with us to explore God, love, and the human soul. We won't apologize for anything during this transcendental exploration...and it won't be boring.

The scope of this page will be broad, and our readers will set the tone. "Spirituality" can encompass almost anything transcending human understanding, so almost anything is fair game for discussion here. All religious faiths are welcomed; we encourage anyone representing any faith to contribute to the dialog in the form of letters, phone calls, emails, proposals, and rebuttals. We will provide a forum for any spiritual leader in whom our readers may be interested. *This Side Up* staff will carefully tabulate all reader mail and coordinate personal replies or published responses in subsequent issues. Whenever requested, reader anonymity will be protected.

This editor's background -- and bias -- primarily resides in the American Judeo-Christian mainstream. (I prefer to identify myself as a "follower of Jesus," avoiding the "Christian" label. This allows me to distance myself from the Jerry Falwell types who often appear confused about Jesus' teachings of love and service.) This won't just be a "Christian" page, however. It is my job to temper my bias throughout this page. If I fail -- and my bias dominates the page -- it is your job, as readers, to call me to task on it with a phone call, letter, or email.

The *Religion and Spirituality* page also will provide readers with comprehensive listings of church-sponsored and other spiritual events in Sacramento and the region. We encourage everyone to forward this information to *This Side Up* staff. Of course, churches or other organizations may purchase advertising to inform readers in more detail. (All nonprofit organizations, including churches, are eligible for greatly discounted advertising rates.) We will also describe other religious or spiritual publications that may be of interest to our readers.

The Publisher and staff at *This Side Up* are deeply grateful to Reverend Freda Smith, Senior Pastor at River City (Sacramento) Metropolitan Community Church (MCC) Cathedral of Promise, for offering to write a column in each monthly issue. Rev. Freda's first column appears adjacent. This editor is certain that Rev. Freda's monthly column will reach deep within *Our Community* and begin a healing touch for many. This Preacher, however, won't be preachy. Rev. Freda fully understands her role within MCC, a national and international Christian-oriented community church, which tailors its Sunday services and other programs to *Our Community*, but welcomes everyone. In her monthly column, Rev. Freda will speak to readers nervously exploring their spirituality for the first time, and she will delve into the minds of spiritual veterans.

We launch this page under a simple assumption: everyone needs spirituality. For too long, some in America have asserted that members of *Our Community* have no claim to God or spiritual truth, though these arguments contradict themselves. Many of America's most sacred institutions have slammed their doors in our faces. We will expose this history and challenge this pattern within the *Religion and Spirituality* page.

It would be easy to use this forum to publicly attack those hate-mongers who attack us. Our writers, however, will be discouraged from doing so. While we will report on valid news stories concerning the "anti-gay-so-called-Christian" forces and similar movements, we will not dilute this important forum by reveling in our "opponents'" personal setbacks and failures. This forum is designed for spiritual insight and healing; personal attacks serve little purpose.

Spiritual truth cannot stay closeted for long. The secret's out on this page...attraction, affection, and the expression of love toward a person of the same gender is not a sin. And, yes, the Bible tells us so. We hope you join the dialog.

**TSU...**

# Just As I Am

By Rev. Freda Smith
*TSU* Writer/Columnist

So it begins. A column. A chance to explore the vast territory of Spirituality within *Our Community*. The editor has given me permission to develop the column in my own way. I have chosen to build it around vignettes — glimpses of the multi-faceted face of spirituality in *Our Community*. I will call this column *Just As I Am*. A name I have used to talk about my personal spirituality long before Billy Graham chose it for his autobiography.

In fact, this is what religion and spirituality is all about. Getting past the externals and digging deep. "Who am I?" "What does it mean?" "What is good and true?" "Just as I am."

In each issue, I intend to present a short piece called *"My Journey,"* telling of my growing understanding of what it means to be gay and Christian. In a recent conversation a young gay person said to me: "I don't understand what the big issue about being gay is." I replied: "I am glad you feel that way — I want to see a world where being gay is not a big issue." I believe there is still much that needs to change, within the church and outside of it. We are not yet where we are going, but thanks to all that is holy, we are not where we have been. We have come a long way in my lifetime.

### My Journey

The sound was eery. Coyotes on the close hill above us. I shivered — not only from the cold. Dad had moved us "outside of town." Later I would know how far "outside" we were. My great-grandmother and my little brother were in the small two room house behind us. We were still outside, camping out on the ground until Dad could build a home to hold us. I was five years old...in an Idaho wilderness. I believe I was already feeling "different."

*(Continued next issue...)*

### Today's Sermon Excerpt

Also, in each issue, I will include a brief excerpt of a sermon I have given.

Giving: The subject was "sharing." A vital theme for *Our Community*. Lambda, the AIDS Foundation, CARES, Breaking Barriers, the Samaritan Center, Churches, Synagogues, and other services depend on our unselfish support in order to survive.

Paraphrasing my message, I said: "In the words of noted UFMCC theologian, Jerri Ann Harvey: "Get over your Cheap Selves!" I went on...

We all have cheap selves...not sharing, not giving, wondering why someone else doesn't do something...or giving only that which we no longer need.

A new pastor went to see an

***Continued page 21***

God Misses You...Come Home

Rev. Freda Smith
**364-4325**
http://www.sacweb.com/mccsac
E-Mail: revfsmith@aol.com

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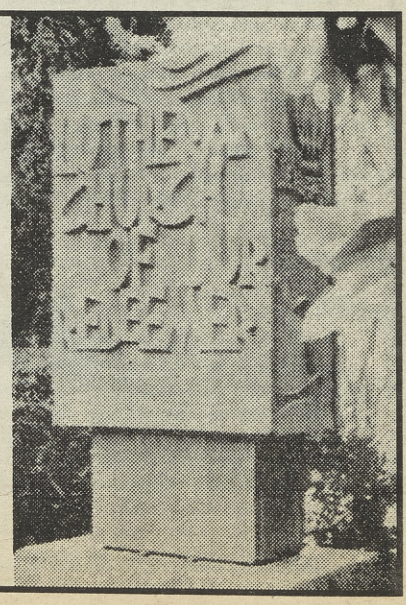
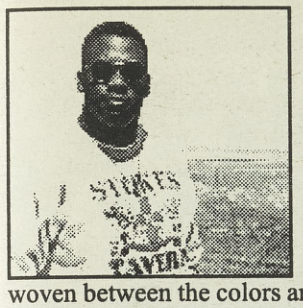




# And Justice for All...

By Michael Stokes
*TSU* Culture & Ethnicity Editor

Welcome to a brave new world. One where the colors of the rainbow flags we wave are woven between the colors and heritages of those waving them. Welcome to the *Culture & Ethnicity* page...a place where we will celebrate our differences and explore our problems.

The articles and editorials you will read in the coming months will do more than explore *Our Community's* culture, they will explore the complexities of cultures within cultures and how they influence our relationships with one another. We will tackle tough issues: prejudice, denial, factioning, interracial relationships. We'll boldly ask the questions and explore the answers with our readers.

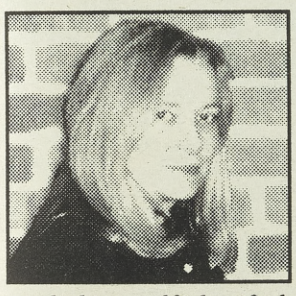
We'll expose myths and challenge stereotypes head-on, with no apologies. We'll talk with members of *Our Community*, many of whom are living positive lives and making a difference.

Discrimination and race play a part in all aspects of American life and culture. These problems often seem more prevalent within *Our Community*. With this page, we intend to create a sounding board for our readers -- focusing on their problems and experiences. I also plan to share my own experiences, thereby contributing to this dialog. I believe people are in denial about race relations in America. That makes it hard for those of us who experience the day-to-day ignorance of discrimination to speak openly. This section of the newspaper will hopefully encourage same-sex couples and people of ethnicity to tell their stories of triumph, and those not so triumphant. We want our readers to know about cultural events happening within, and outside of, *Our Community*.

Speak up, speak out, be heard, and feel good about yourself. That's what the *Culture & Ethnicity* page is all about...you! This is your chance to be heard.

**TSU...**

***This Side Up encourages you to submit listings of cultural events in and around Sacramento to provide our readers the opportunity to participate.***



# The Other Side of The Mirage

By Annabella
*TSU* Contributing Writer

*Valerie Marlow and Phyllis Smith are African-American women, or black women, if you will. Both are lesbian, self-identified Christians and a vital part of Our Community. For ten years, five of those as a couple, Phyllis and Valerie have remained the best of friends as well as business partners; together they own two Mrs. Field's Cookies stores in the Sacramento area.*

*Between these two women, there is a pronounced individualism, along with a strong sense of trust and sisterhood. "Lovers come and go, but friends are forever...friends are for life." Valerie says simply.*

*Five years ago, on January 29, 1993, The Mirage, the only predominantly lesbian bar in Sacramento, opened it's doors to Our Community. Valerie, the sole proprietor, along with Phyllis, worked together to make it the success it has been.*

***Annabella:*** How did The Mirage come about?

I had been a manager for Taco Bell for eight years until I was in a car accident in 1986. My neck was broken and I was unable to work for about seven years. I'd always said "I can do a better job if I had my own business". I thought it'd be nice to have a bar.

***Annabella:*** Was it difficult to get it going?

***Valerie:*** The bar itself wasn't a difficult process to get, but the dance permit was. The neighbors opposed it. But we were finally able to get one.

***Annabella:*** Was the opposition because it was a bar for *Our Community*?

***Phyllis:*** No. It was because it was a quiet neighborhood and they thought that dancing would bring people from all over, into their neighborhood.

***Annabella:*** What was the Community response?

***Phyllis:*** Initially, it was very mixed. It took awhile for the old patrons to transition out. We were getting ourselves known to *Our Community*. The old patrons didn't present any problems, they just kind of weeded themselves out after a few months.

***Annabella:*** Did you set out to make it predominately a lesbian bar?

***Valerie:*** I have a vision of The Mirage being a place where basically everyone is welcome. We want it to be for *Our Community*. We've always said that it's for men and women.

***Annabella:*** Are there many African-American clientele?

***Phyllis:*** We have a good number. That's one thing about The Mirage: we want it to be a place where people of all cultures can feel comfortable and welcome.

***Annabella:*** Have you been very involved with *Our Community*'s African-American culture?

***Valerie:*** We've done things for the Community trough The Mirage; mostly fund-raisers for GALA (Gay and Lesbian African Americans).

***Phyllis:*** They've had a yearly barbecue event at The Mirage for several years.

***Annabella:*** What do you feel are the best things about The Mirage?

***Valerie:*** The jukebox, pool table...the laid back atmosphere...

***Phyllis:*** I think that's the biggest thing. A lot of customers come in 'cause they can't hear each other talk when they go to the other bars. Plus the fact that it's a fun environment. We'd like to do a lot more fundraising events...talent events...cultural events like Cinco de Mayo. We have a lot of new and exciting changes for '98.

*Though they are the best of friends, these two pioneering women have lead very differing lives:*

*Valerie, was adopted at birth, grew up in Sacramento and attended an ethnically mixed public school. She was married and "happily divorced" with two teenage children. A year ago, she found her biological mother and siblings (one of whom is a gay brother), and maintains a positive relationship with them. For years before opening The Mirage, she dreamed of owning her own business. She's a self-confident go-getter who is friendly, outgoing and open about her sexuality. She has a social and political appreciation of being African-American, and a positive recognition of the quality and diversity of people around her.*

*Phyllis grew up in a strict Christian household of 4 children in Compton, California and attended predominantly African-American primary schools. Fifteen years ago, she moved to Sacramento to work on her Master's Degree in counseling at CSUS. Employed as a social worker at a non-profit, foster placement agency for 14 years, she has, over time, developed a comfort in bringing her partner to social events at work. Phyllis is a warm, easy-going individual with a deep compassion for people. She also possesses a keen insight and a strong sense of her culture and identity.*

**Annabella:** How long have you been "out"?

**Phyllis:** I've never been "out"...and I've always been "out."

***Valerie:*** I said "I had feelings for women, but I'm not going to do anything" before I got married. I guess it was when I told my kids. My daughter was about 7 and my son was about 5. One of them asked me if I'm gay, and I said "yes." I'm always honest with them.

***Annabella:*** What was your identity like as a child?

***Valerie:*** I was a tomboy to the hilt. I didn't really like boys, but I thought I had to like them, because that was what I was supposed to do. I figured it was the "something-was-wrong-with-me" syndrome. But this is who I am. I just choose not to flaunt it.

***Annabella:*** You are also, both very spiritual. Which do you feel has a stronger connection for you, being African-American or being Christian?

***Phyllis:*** If you know anything about the African-American Community, you know they're interwoven. African-Americans who grow up in and around the church. Even when we were poor and didn't have anything else, we had the church. That was our mainstay. I think to this day, it just follows all of us throughout our lives, whether we choose to go to church or not. I think for a lot of us it stays in our hearts, because it's been "bred into us."

***Annabella:*** What would it take to see a stronger African-American Community develop in Sacramento?

***Phyllis:*** Leadership. A person that is verbal and visible and that a lot of people know.

***Annabella:*** Do you think the "roles" of culture are breaking down?

***Phyllis:*** I don't think they're actually breaking down, I think we have had to blend - for lack of a better term - to fit into certain environments. I don't think anyone can our culture away from us: it's who we are. It's how we represent ourselves, if nothing else, by the color of our skin. We're always set apart regardless of what culture we are.

***Annabella:*** There's a poem by Pat Parker entitled 'To The White Person Who Wants To Be My Friend' in which she wrote "The first thing you must do is forget I'm a lesbian of color; the second thing you must do is never forget I'm a lesbian of color'. How do you feel about that?

***Phyllis:*** What hits me is that a lot of people say 'I have a best friend who is black'. Why do they have to bring attention to that? Yes, it's important to who we are, we can't take that away. But, it isn't all of who we are. If we hear 'I have a best friend who is black', we, sometimes, get offended by that. I wouldn't go around saying 'I have a best friend who is white'. My best friend happens to be black, but that isn't how I identify her.

***Valerie:*** To tell you the truth...I have no response. It's kind of hard for me to be talking about "culture." I mean, I know I'm African-American, black, whatever the correct thing is. But, I don't go into places with the attitude of "I'm black." Yes, I am black - Black people, here I am. White people - I am black. I know I'm black and I'm not color-blind. I just don't look upon it so hard. I know who I am and I just go from there. I'll always be black and African-American. I don't really get into the political arena. But, it is important.

***Phyllis:*** I'm happy there's going to be another paper in town that'll focus on cultural issues. It's way overdue and it's important because we can lump ourselves as Gay-Americans, but we're all different and we should know about and respect each other's differences. I think it's important, and it's unique.

**TSU...**

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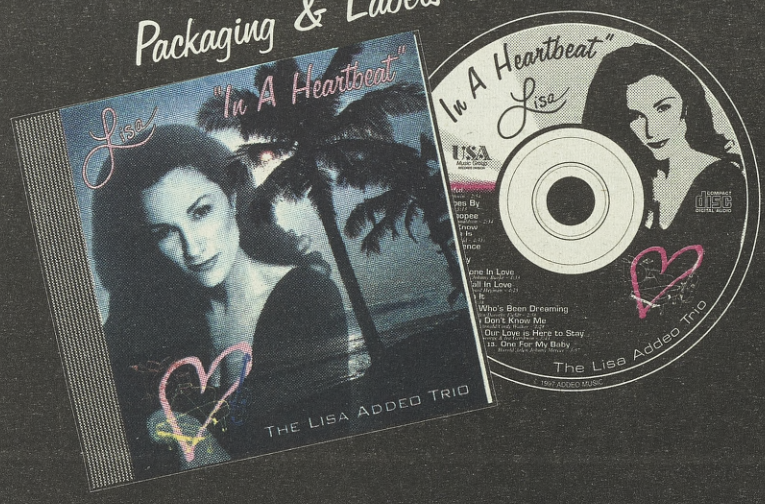

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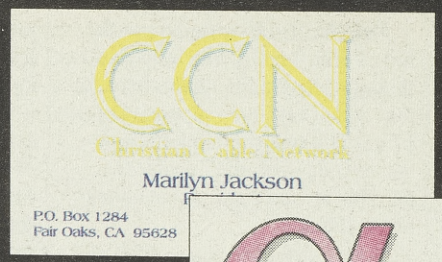


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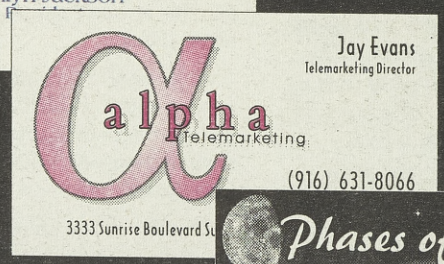


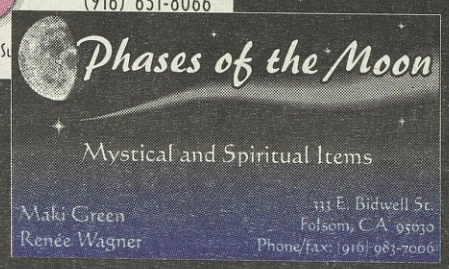


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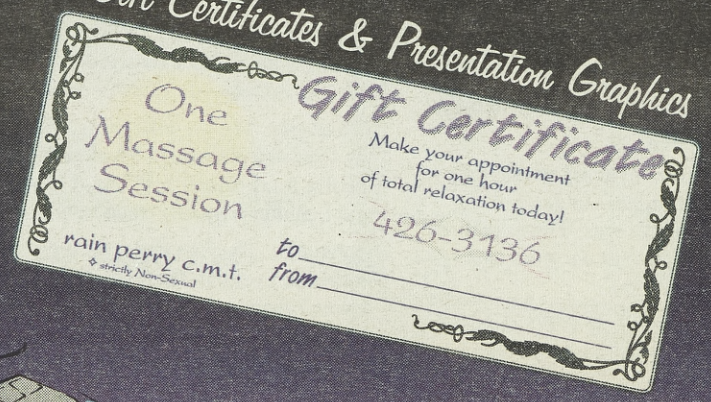


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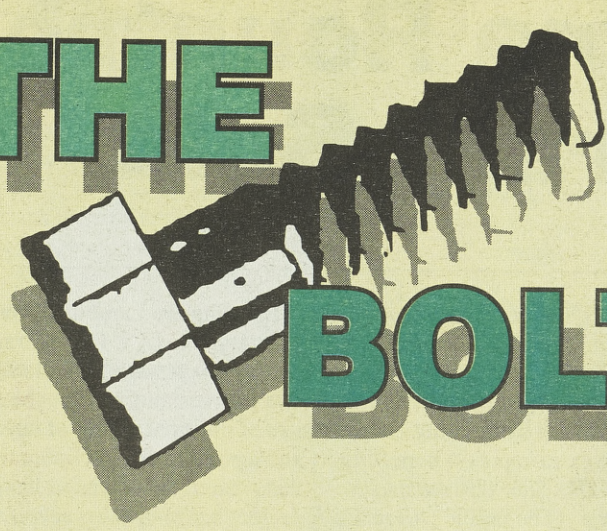

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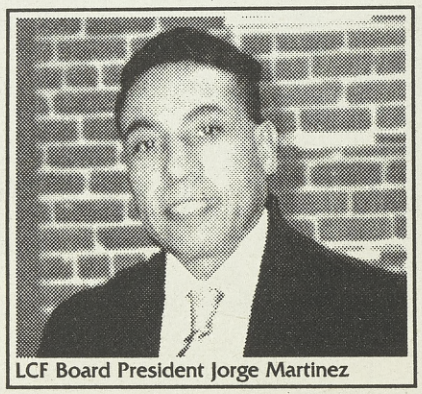
# Jayne Rountree Library Sold

By Jim Long
*TSU* Publisher

In recent weeks, concern has grown rapidly regarding the Lambda Community Center's Jayne Rountree Commemorative Library. As LCC moved into it's new offices at 920 20th Street (next to *This Side Up* newspaper), the Library faced several difficult challenges. The first of which was downsizing to fit in the smaller space. This was accomplished by thinning out the stacks of multiple copies of books, and transferring these extra copies -- hopefully, temporarily -- to *This Side Up* newspaper and other locations. (The public will retain access to all books currently stored in the offices of *This Side Up*.) AIDS related material was routed to the offices of the Lambda AIDS Project. Some outdated works that were not specifically related to *Our Community* were discarded.


LCF Board President Jorge Martinez

The second challenge to face the Library was the funding to pay the $117 rent for the new office space. This challenge was met by Michael Bennett, then head of the Rountree Library. He signed a six-month lease for the Library, and agreed to remain liable for rent during this period. Mr. Bennett has been the project's principal organizer and caretaker for the past eight years. Throughout that time, he has paid all Library expenses out of his own pocket without reimbursement from the Lambda Community Fund.

Due to the LCF's financial hardship, some expressed concern about the possible seizure of Library assets from creditors. Several Community members spearheaded an effort to transfer ownership of the Library from the LCF. After several weeks of discussions and private meetings, George Martinez, LCF President, agreed to release the Library project, stating "We will go along with any Community proposal that will protect the Jayne Rountree Commemorative Library, which we consider to be one of the most valuable and extensive gay, lesbian. bisexual and transgendered collections in Northern California."

With that, the proposal came swiftly: sell the library to the one person who has shown the most dedication and enthusiasm to its preservation -- Michael Bennett. Ownership of the Jayne Rountree Commemorative Library was transferred to Bennett for $1, effective at the beginning of this year.

The movement to protect one of Our Community's most precious resources is now going strong. A growing group of Community members, meeting in the Library each Sunday at 10 am, is planning an open Community meeting for April. At the meeting, the Planning Committee will present plans for establishing the Rountree Library as a freestanding archive. Volunteers will be sought to donate several hours a week, allowing the expansion of Library hours to adequately serve the needs of *Our Community*.

**TSU...**

***To receive more information about meetings or to contact the Rountree Library Planning Committee, please email* This Side Up *at SactoPub@aol.com (subject line: "Rountree Committee"), or call or write the newspaper. We will quickly forward your message to Michael Bennett.***

## What Is Your Community Doing For You?

By Matthew Burlingame
*TSU* Production Editor

If *This Side Up*'s *Just Do Something!* page is the "what are you doing for your Community" part of the newspaper, then the "*Our Community*" page is the "what is your Community doing for you" page. On this page, we will provide information on local groups, events and organizations that serve *Our Community*.

While much of this page will focus on important Community information, we will also feature a regular column that will keep you up to date on the lighter side of things. We'll describe what's been happening in Community clubs, such as Valley Bears or Gay and Lesbian Sierrans, and we'll let you know which books were the focus of last week's Open Book Reading Group. Fundraisers, promotional parties -- anywhere there's something going on within *Our Community*, we'll let you know about it on this page.

We will also keep you informed as to what new Community groups are being formed, and let you know what they're doing to support *Our Community*. We'll also cover the activities of more established groups that routinely stand up for *Our Community*, including SACWN, LIFE Lobby, and the Freedom Fair Committee.

*This Side Up* newspaper's *Our Community* page will attempt to create a functioning, supportive environment for members of *Our Community* to keep informed on what's out there and what's up.

Thank you for being part of *Our Community*!

**TSU...**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# LCC Memorial Wall at Risk

By Troy DeVore
*TSU* Contributing Writer and Former LCC Staffperson

The LCC "Founder's Wall" still resides in the former Center offices at 919 20th Street. The wall, constructed of glass blocks, was designed both as an LCC fund raiser and a Community memorial. Each block displays a plaque immortalizing a former contributor or loved one. The blocks and inscriptions were "sold" for contributions ranging from $100 to $500.

The block that stands out in my mind the most was purchased by the sister of a man who had died of AIDS complications. She came into the LCC one day while I was there and asked if she could purchase the block located next to the existing block of her brother's significant other. Her whole family had scraped together enough money to "purchase" the block. After being promised the block would be adorned within two weeks, she was dismayed several weeks later to learn that it hadn't. Two weeks later, when the block was finally installed, I opened the Center for her and her family to view the plaque. This greatly contributed to the family's "closure" over her brother's death. As each family member left thanking me with tears in their eyes, I realized the importance of these little glass blocks. Most of the blocks in the Wall have a similar story behind them; the memory they purchased must be protected.

The Wall was designed to be moved. I urge all those concerned, especially those who have purchased blocks in the Wall, to contact the Lambda Community Center at 442-0185 and demand that the Wall be protected.

**TSU...**

***The LCC Memorial Wall ("Founder's Wall") is scheduled for disassembly this month. The Publisher of This Side Up newspaper has notified LCC staff that, if requested, we will store the Wall in our office until a permanent location is chosen and the funds are raised for re-construction.***

# There's Work To Do...

By Jim Long
*TSU* Publisher

A community is often judged by the strength of its nonprofit, charitable and other community organizations. Those organizations are in turn judged, in part, by the number of volunteers they attract. By these standards, *Our Community* is not doing well. Volunteerism is considered quaint by many -- the duty of others who "have nothing better to do." This attitude prevents many Community organizations from effectively serving Our People. Fewer in need are being served, and the overall quality of service is declining. This is surprising. We live in the state capital; the place where laws are made and things happen. In Sacramento, rallies are held, leaders come to speak, and most of us sit home and watch it on the TV news. *This Side Up* newspaper will do its part in encouraging renewed and innovative Community activism and volunteerism. This is the mission of the *Just Do Something!* page.

Many argue that the days of doing something simply because "it's the right thing to do" are long gone. Some will not volunteer with AIDS organizations because they were originally church based. Some of *Our Community's* groups will not support other Community organizations merely because of where they hold their meetings. Yet this lack of volunteering and Community support can't all be blamed on apathy and politics.

Community-wide disorganization and mismanagement of the "volunteer pool" contributes to the problem. Several Community organizations routinely plead for volunteers. Yet, when they come, they're often poorly utilized, and, in many instances, never contacted again. Some volunteers, after placing themselves on the line for *Our Community*, are worked to exhaustion with no thanks or recognition for their efforts. These prospective volunteers and potential Community leaders then sometimes grow disenchanted and never volunteer again. When this occurs, over time, the whole Community becomes fragile, and basic service institutions begin to crumble. This is occurring right now in *Our Community*. But, we're going to do our part in reversing this trend.

This is more than a page in the newspaper highlighting volunteer-driven organizations (although we also do that in the *Our Community* section). The *Just Do Something!* page will provide a comprehensive listing of volunteer opportunities throughout the Sacramento Valley and the region. We'll tabulate which organizations need volunteers, when and where they need them, and what skills are necessary. For those readers who want to do something, we'll make it easy for you to get busy within *Your Community*.

We'll highlight grassroots efforts that are designed to serve *Our Community*. A little "good press" for such efforts -- especially during the early stages of these projects -- might make the difference between success and failure. We'll help those already committed to service get their information out.

Volunteering and giving takes on many forms, one of which is providing non-monetary donations. An item gathering dust around your house or sitting in your closet unused can be of tremendous help to those in need. We will, therefore, also describe material needs of local nonprofit, charitable and community organizations.

To further support our mission, we will recognize individual volunteers serving *Our Community*. It is important to remind everyone that these volunteer efforts are both noticed and appreciated.

We hope this page will inspire you to take a more active role in *Our Community*...a more active role in *Your Community*.

***Just Do Something!***

**TSU...**

***If you would like to nominate someone for volunteer recognition, please send in the name of the volunteer along with your name, address and telephone number to "Just Do Something, Volunteer Recognition," care of This Side Up newspaper, 920A 20th Street, Sacramento 95814. We also welcome your emails at SactoPub@aol.com; please specify "Volunteer Recognition" in the subject line.***


SACRAMENTO AIDS FOUNDATION

Hand-to-Hand Project

is seeking volunteers to provide critically needed assistance and emotional support to persons living with AIDS.

With at least one new case of AIDS being diagnosed each day, your help is urgently needed...

**PLEASE CARE**

TO OBTAIN MORE INFORMATION OR TO APPLY FOR TRAINING, CONTACT THE HAND-TO-HAND PROJECT TODAY AT:

**(916) 448-2437, ext. 212**



*A Personal Message of Gratitude...*

*Thank You*
*Thank You*
*Thank You*
*Thank you*

To all volunteers -- past and present -- of the Lambda Center, Freedom Fair, and other affiliated programs, we thank you and offer our best wishes.

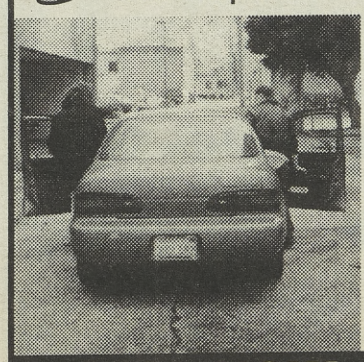
Please always stay involved and work hard in making *Our Community* a better place.

***Former Lambda Center Staff***



Breaking Barriers

a metropolitan community center for AIDS program



**Do something about AIDS!**

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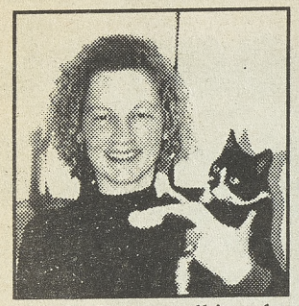
We need some special people. People who are free during the day. People who have their own car and insurance. People who want the rewards you get from helping others in need.

**447-AIDS**

**CALL NOW - PEOPLE NEED YOU!**

# Crossing Boundaries



By T. Laine Cunningham
*TSU* Transgender Editor

Boys who just wanna be girls. That's your most basic definition of a male transvestite (TV) or transsexual (TS). Well I'm a girl, and I find a guy in drag sexy as hell. I'm not talking about some burly Scotsman in a kilt with that leather pouch suspiciously positioned at front dead center, either. I'm talking 'bout the Mary Kay outlet, got your nails done, squinch that ass into a leather mini sexy. The Masai warriors of Kenya have been doing it forever. Gettin' all dolled up every year so they can flounce around lookin' pretty to catch themselves a wife.

Ah, but there's more than wicked sex going on. Here there be power. Shamans and healers, priests and priestesses of tribal cultures worldwide have a long and revered history of transgender activity. Often the tribe's spiritual counselor masqueraded as or wore the accessories of the opposite sex while ministering to patients. Many of the shaman dressed this way every day. Crossing genders is a transcendence, a foray into an unseen land for the answers to what ails this world.

And the tradition within our Western world is as ancient as the Greeks. It was Tiresias, the blind prophet of Oedipus the King, who was transformed into a woman for seven years. Modern technology performs this miracle now, although with more effort, with sutures and pain. Boys who just wanna be girls become women. Girls who just wanna be boys become men. Here there be magic.

Strip away the shame our Puritanical culture has heaped up on transsexuals and transvestites. I dare you. There's nothing repulsive here, nothing disgusting, or laughable, or sub-human. Women are no longer banished to the wilderness as "unclean" because they bleed every month. Let's not leave other things in the dark because somebody thinks they smack of S-E-X.

On this page you will not find fluff and nonsense about makeup tips and what everybody wore their first night out in public, although some of the organizations highlighted in the Spotlight section will focus on transformation assistance. You will discover how the transgender community affects and is affected by partners, friends, relatives, employers, neighbors, co-workers, health care professionals, psychiatrists and counselors, the guy who drives the bus and the gal who bags the groceries. Just because one person has managed to transcend gender, doesn't mean those around him/her are capable of the same.

So let's hear it. Tell me about that sterling employee you "promoted" to a less public position when he/she came out. Tell me how the kids decided which of you gets to be called "mommy" or "daddy." Spouses, why haven't you told your parents about your partner's habits? And what about you gay fellahs who groan and roll your eyes because you "can't stand the drag queens"? Wasn't it just a few years back, some rednecks were saying the same about fags? Oh, sorry, was that yesterday? If you can't stand pork, stop wallowing in the mud.

Call, write, stop in, e-mail, carve it in wax, doodle it in eyeliner, just say it. Hormones, the surgery, the traditional parents who've cut you both from the will, how much you hate the assumption that you're gay, or if you're bi, whether your lovers have ever met...everything. Don't worry about making everything sound pretty, just sound off. This is the real stuff, it's happening in the real world every day, and ignoring it or suppressing it ain't gonna get you nowhere.

And just as you can't expect a friend or relative to understand you if they don't know what's going on in your life, TGs can't expect to be understood by *Our Community* unless individual members speak out. Even I question why a GG is the editor of the TG page. Right now I'm willing to be sympathetic and say everyone must have been afraid to come out in such a public forum. Now you've no excuse. I'm the buffer, the face that presents your concerns and your issues to the public at large. Talk to me. Your name and any uniquely identifying details of your story will be omitted if you choose.

***Just keep talking.***

**TSU...**

# Trans 101: TV/TS

By Heather M. and Matthew Burlingame
*TSU* Contributing Writer / *TSU* Production Editor

In the past several years the term "LGBT" has been added to the standard abbreviation list of publications within *Our Community*. Yet, aside from the occasional coverage of RuPaul or a local drag show, the "T" may as well be silent. Traditionally thought of as little more than a red-headed stepchild to *Our Community*, even today the transgendered remain isolated and often misunderstood.

Opposite sex identification tendencies usually begin in early childhood. As with some homosexual children, there are often "clues" to the parent, such as a desire to play games with toys that are traditionally associated with the opposite sex. Occasionally playing "dress up" in parents' or siblings' clothing is also common. Most times, parents and other influential people in the child's life, adhering to the "societal norm," often attempt to repress the child's opposite sex traits at an early stage in the child's development.

Most Trans tendencies, however, either resurface or do not manifest until sexual puberty. When the individual discovers and explores the desire to wear clothing of the opposite sex, the individual commonly experiences a sexual rush and therefore associates this behavior as merely a sexual fetish. This is, however, only the initial motivating factor for this behavior. One psychological theory suggests the sexual excitement occurring during early cross-dressing is merely the subconscious using arousal as encouragement for the individual to continue.

As the urges progress and cross-dressers allow themselves to indulge in several experiences, many find that dressing becomes a necessity. "It begins to build up. It's...it's hard to explain, really. It's not like an addiction, it's more like a need...this demanding urge to express this part of yourself that you have to continually keep locked up, but is so much a part of you it refuses to be ignored," explains Rachel, a male-to-female transgendered who came out three years ago.

Eventually, the sexual exhilaration fades and the main motivation soon becomes what most report as a shift in their "core identity" from one gender to the other. At this point the transgendered person commonly begins to move toward one or the other end of the Transgendered spectrum. Much like the Kinsey Scale with homosexuality at one end and heterosexuality at the other, the transgendered scale has Transvestitism and Transsexualism at the opposite ends. Most individuals fall somewhere in between (i.e., most transvestites have some level of transsexual tendencies because they identify with more feminine attributes).

Transvestites tend to need traditionally female clothing (e.g., dresses and stockings) to achieve the emotional satisfaction they crave and to experience the shift in their core identity. Transsexuals may experience this at first, but their focus quickly moves from the clothing to the body itself...an uncompromising desire to have the body

*Continued Page 21*

# The Last Word

By Andrew Last
*TSU* Writer/Columnist

Welcome to our first installment on a regular column in *This Side Up* newspaper on legal issues facing the gay, lesbian and HIV+ community. My name is Andrew Last ("like first and last"), and I am a licensed attorney with a practice that serves the gay and lesbian community. After working for Sacramento County, I first opened my office in the Summer of 1994. Since that time I have primarily chosen to represent clients who need assistance in the areas of criminal defense or Social Security appeals for disability benefits. My first case was a gentleman with full-blown AIDS, and since that time over 90% of the cases I have taken before the Social Security Administration involved HIV+ claimants.

> *"Send lawyers, guns and money to get me out of this!"*
> – Warren Zevon

Let's start off with a brief list of topics that I intend to cover over the next few issues. Of course, as we get feedback from our readers, the column will try to keep as diverse and "au currant" as possible. So send in your comments and questions!

Next month I will review the various components of the Social Security Administration and the process one goes through in applying for Social Security and/or Supplemental Security Income benefits. In April, we will consider the issue of "disability" and particularly the criteria that Social Security uses to evaluate claims and the kind of evidence necessary to prove one can no longer work. At some point we will address the complicated issues raised when one is considering a return to the workplace after being disabled due to a chronic illness such as AIDS or a mental disorder.

In addition to the Social Security issues, I would like to use this column to talk about criminal law. As the State of California chooses to divert more of our limited resources away from education and health care, more and more money is being spent on punishing the poor, the weak, the disenfranchised (and, sometimes, the guilty). This forum is exactly the right place to discuss these choices and to weigh in with our criticism or support.

As a little kid, and later when I went away to college and law school, my mom always said, "Andrew there's right, there's wrong, and there's legal." (She was a doctor, and she was never too fond of lawyers.) Having been both a deputy district attorney and a criminal defense attorney, I have a fair number of cases where "legal" and "fair" weren't necessarily the same. For example, some laws are routinely enforced against homosexuals, but almost never against heterosexuals.

Another issue that could change the way this country looks at drugs, and is of particular concern to the HIV+ community, is Proposition 215 and "medicinal marijuana." In the months ahead, I would like to present both sides of these issues and then give you my personal opinion. If you agree, wonderful. If you don't, wonderful. Either way, let us know what you think.

**TSU...**

***Andrew Last is a Sacramento area attorney specializing in criminal defense and Social Security appeals for HIV+ patients. He can be reached either through This Side Up newspaper or directly at his private practice at (916) 446-5574. All comments regarding this column will be reviewed first by This Side Up staff, and then forwarded. Internet users may email him at SactoPub@aol.com.***

# Gay Marriage: Do We Really Want It?

By Dianne Robbins
*TSU* Contributing Writer and
McGeorge Law School Student

Probably no other issue affecting *Our Community* has raised such fervor in recent times than that of our right to marry. However, even within *Our Community*, sharp differences of opinion pervade.

Traditional marriage has been marked by high divorce rates, domestic violence, spousal rape, and, perhaps most egregiously, the indicia of ownership. *Our Community* must ask itself if we really want to join in this legacy.

The fundamental factor underlying heterosexual marriage is a power differential. Historically, women were "sold" into marriage by their fathers. Once married, the man and woman became "one" (that "one" being the husband). A woman had no property rights and no right to bodily integrity. Because the two were legally one entity, a man could not "rape" his wife -- that would amount to rape of one's self, a legal impossibility. While relations between partners in marriage has become vastly liberalized, the power differential persists, and will continue to exist as long as men are physically more powerful and (statistically) favored economically.

In gay and lesbian relationships, however, we have available to us a unique opportunity, and one unavailable to our heterosexual counterparts: the elimination of this power differential. Our relationships can be truly equal partnerships, which, despite the best intentions of both members, is not possible in a traditional marriage. So, again, we must ask ourselves...do we really want the legal right to marry?

One of the major objections the dominant culture espouses to "gay marriage" is that marriage is a union between a man and woman. Fine. Call our unions something else. My personal position is one of pro-choice. I believe that, as citizens, we should have the right to choose whether to enter into a legally recognized relationship with our significant others. Our government and fellow citizens must recognize the right of *Our Community* to choose legal commitment with our partners. This will entail numerous economic benefits including insurance and inheritance. The legal sanctioning of our relationships will also allow us spousal privilege, hospital and jail visitations, and allow us to automatically make decisions for each other without having to jump through endless, complicated and expensive legal hoops.

While we do not yet enjoy these benefits of legal partnership, we can still be free to define our relationships within new parameters. We can interact with our partners on an equal footing. Since there is not yet legal precedent for our relationships, we can begin creating a foundation out of hopes and possibilities. We can transcend the traditional notions of marriage, and achieve the brand of loving, supportive, and uplifting relationships everyone claims to desire. We have that potential. It is possible; I'm sure of it.

**TSU...**

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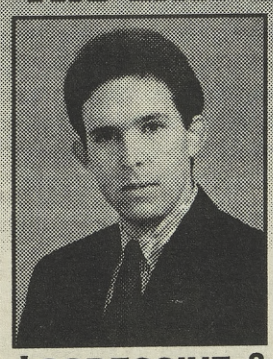

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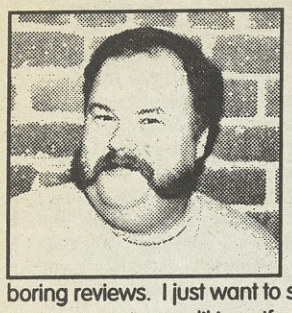
# The Good, The Bad & Good Burger



By Tom Swanner
TSU Video Reviewer

Since this is the first column, I should let you know my rating system...I don't have one. If I like it, you'll know it; if I hate it, you'll know it. I've always hated long winded, boring reviews. I just want to see what's good and avoid what's bad. I hope this reviewing process meets your liking. If not...well we don't want to go there.

One thing I did want to mention is if you haven't seen Titanic, it's time. This is not the movie to wait to see on video. You might want to eventually see it on video, but this is one that really needs to be seen for the first time on the big screen. Anyway, here's what's available right now on video.

## Hercules

*(Rated G)*

I know what you're all saying. Just another Disney queen. Whatever. This is yet another fine example of why Disney is the only game in town when it comes to animated movies. The animation is closer to the style of *Aladdin* with bright colors, fast action and a very funny script. The great musical score is done by Alan Menkin and David Zippel and reminds me of *Little Shop of Horrors*, also penned by Menkin. As we've seen in the last few years, the animated classic seems to have been made for adults rather than children...which is okay by me.

## Tracey Takes On

*(Not Rated)*

I know this is an HBO original. I also know it's a series. What you probably don't know is that it's available on video and priced to sell. Tracey Ullman plays a dozen or more characters in this show, everything from a sleazy New York cabby to a professional golfer's girlfriend. The latter story line is featured in the sex-romance-fantasy-themed box. The first two tapes are available now and should fit right next to the *AbFab* shrine. These tapes are not rated and not for kids.

## G.I. Jane

*(Rated R)*

Demi Moore is the first woman to enter the Navy Seals. Okay. Demi Moore shaves her head and receives a lot of money. Okay. Demi Moore says "suck my dick" to her drill instructor. Cool. She also hits a bell with a baseball bat. She is so talented. I really liked this movie; it was just mindless, and there is a very strong female character (that would be Demi) that really makes you want her to win. The above mentioned drill instructor scene was very entertaining. There is a little something for everyone: Moore for the women, and lots of half-dressed men for the men.

## Air Force One

*(Rated R)*

Why is it Harrison Ford movies are so much fun? Ford plays the President of the United States and Air Force One is hijacked by terrorists. Okay, not much of a plot, but still the film just sucks you in. You really hate the bad guys and just like the before mentioned *G.I. Jane*, you really want the good characters to win. The film was directed by Wolfgang Peterson who directed the great action movie *Das Boot*.

## The Matchmaker

*(Rated R)*

Janeane Garofalo stars in this very charming romantic comedy about a political assistant sent to Ireland to find her boss' Irish roots. The election is coming up fast and her boss is dropping in the polls. Garofalo arrives during the annual matchmaking festival. It just gets funny from there. I have always been a big fan of Janeane Garofalo and I'm so glad to see them finding films for her unique humor. I do have to say that if you don't like Garofalo, you'll probably hate this film. Still I liked it a lot.

## The Man Who Knew Too Little

*(Rated PG)*

Bill Murray stars as an American tourist who gets caught in James Bondish like moments all the time thinking its part of an interactive acting performance. You'd think that Bill Murray might make this work. Well, sometimes he does and it's very funny, but most of the time you just shake your head 'cause the man who brought us *Meatballs* and *Stripes* is making movies like this.

## Excess Baggage

*(Rated PG-13)*

Alicia Silverstone proves here that *Clueless* was a fluke. This is so stupid. It's the kind of movie that you watch and think it's got to get better. It doesn't. Silverstone stars as the daughter of a very powerful man who doesn't pay enough attention to her. Did the executives at Columbia think this was a plot worth producing? "Dad doesn't love me enough...so I'll show him." Sounds like a Shirley Temple musical.

## Most Wanted

*(Rated R)*

This movie would have been higher up on the list if it didn't get so stupid from time to time. A man is being framed for killing the first lady (no, not Hillary), and he has to prove his innocence before he's killed. Slim in plot, but full of action. You might even like this one better if you don't expect much.

## Critical Care

*(Rated R)*

This should be a very good movie. It has a very good cast, but the script, or direction, or something, just didn't work. A doctor who gets a little too involved in his patient's life, just seems too mean spirited. Through most of it, you're just waiting for the final credits. The scenes with Helen Mirren are really wonderful, but not enough to make me suggest watching this.

## Devil's Advocate

*(Rated R)*

I hated the ending. The movie is pretty good, but then bang -- bad ending. Keanu Reeves stars in what I thought was a comedy about a young lawyer courted by the devil. It sounds like it might be fun, right? Well, it's more a drama and it's no fun. I don't even mind Al Pacino's over the top performance. After all, he's the Devil. But that ending.... They must have been so sure they had a gold mine, that they never had any test surveys done. If they had, they would have changed that stupid ending.

## Air Bud

*(Rated PG)*

I wouldn't have even reviewed this movie if it wasn't for my other half (Danny). He really liked this movie. A dog that can play basketball. There is your plot line. I'm sure that the people at Disney said "hey, I heard of a dog that can play basketball" (quiet pause in the Board Room). "Sounds great; here's 20 million dollars." The dog is really cute, and he did get his leg amputated after filming because of cancer. I almost feel guilty wondering why no one thought to include a plot. So, I give it an okay. Danny says real good.

## Cinderella

*(Not Rated)*

Whitney Houston stars in and produced this television movie based on the Rogers and Hammerstein's musical *Cinderella*. I say based 'cause Whitney didn't like all the songs in the musical as it was written, so she took other Rogers and Hammerstein songs and added them to the show...isn't that special? The cast is great and make the film that much more fun; pulling from television, Broadway, movies and the recording industry. Very Disney sets and costumes, but all in all I would rather see little Leslie Ann Warren singing in her own little corner. The original version with the whole score is available to buy or rent everywhere. Oh, and Whitney, what was with that hair? This thing is not rated and probably only for kids.

## Good Burger

*(Rated PG)*

Let me start by saying that this was made for kids under 13 years old. I am so glad that I am an adult and not 13, because I would hate to think that Hollywood really thought I would like this movie. I watched 20 minutes of this thinking to myself...it's not going to get better and I have no interest in any of the characters; and if I found out one of the actors in this movie had died, I really wouldn't care. I decided to turn off the movie. Then I thought...what if Danny likes this? He may want to keep watching this. All during this thought process the movie continues.... Finally, the plot of the movie is exposed -- not that it matters. Danny turns to me and says..."can I turn this crap off?" Yes!

**TSU...**

# Our Mania Over Movies

By Billy Whitlock Jr.
***TSU* Film Editor**

Movies. They hold our dreams, our passions, our pain, our joy, our fears and hopes and our inner child. Like most art, they are a reflection of ourselves...our humanity, our inhumanity and ultimately our never ending struggle to reach beyond ourselves. They are the result of pure imagination, taken shape in all the colors and lights and digitized sounds we can imagine and comprehend. And there is no limit to the stories they tell us and the places they allow us to visit. Movies are bigger than all of us -- small windows into realities that excite us, or realities we would fear to acknowledge without the safety of the screen to protect us. We hope to use this page to provide you with a road map...a guide to which windows you wish to peer through, and those which you wish to carefully avoid. Welcome to Celluloid....

**TSU...**

# What A Time To Be Gay

By Troy DeVore
*TSU* Pop Culture Editor

In the years that I've been out there's been many changes made. As a child the only gay character I ever saw on television was Billy Crystal's character on *Soap*. He was a total stereotypical version of what gays are *supposed* to be: flamboyant, narcissistic, and unhappy. It wasn't a positive experience for me watching him flit about on the screen. This is only one example of how, if there was a gay character on the tube or in a movie, it was not positive. But now we have celebrities coming out as gay people and even some of those as gay characters. Hell, there's even a prime time sitcom with a lesbian lead character who is not a butch or a man-hater or an auto mechanic -- not that there's anything wrong with those things, but Ellen is wholesome, has issues not relating to her homosexuality, and is looking for a steady relationship instead of a one night fling.

With this page we hope to bring you all the information we can get on what is going on in TV, books, zines, the Internet and anywhere else that brings about positive outlooks into *Our Community*. Aside from the horoscope and gossip, we will be taking you on a tour of pop culture at the turn of this fascinating century.

The Internet has become a major part of our lives, and we'll be taking you to some interesting sites that you can enjoy at your own pace. Some of the sites may be of interest to only men, some only for women, but we suggest checking them *all* out and deciding if they have anything for you as a member of *Our Community*. These sites will be listed on this page in a section called "Modem of Travel."

As far as television goes, I would like to provide the newest listings of television programs that will or do have gay characters that are positive role models or of interest to *Our Community*. This won't take full swing until next month, but see how it develops. Please let me know if you have information you think should be included.

In the planning stages is a column that will let you know who is who in the community we live in, but more importantly, it will let you know what they are doing! *Stop!* Don't even go there! This will not be a "who's sleeping with who" kind of thing but more of a political/social information service. "But I ain't one to gossip, so you didn't hear that from me." If you have any information that may be useful for this column, please send it to *Pop Culture,* care of *This Side Up*.

More than anything, I want this to be **our** page. If you have suggestions for articles, information we don't have, or just want to say 'hello,' please do so. I also want this page to be for everyone; I don't care if you're a gay man, lesbian, transgendered, bisexual, or even straight. If you want to see something on this page, let me know and I'll see what I can do to help that along.

**TSU...**

THIS SIDE UP
*Newspaper*

***is looking for quality people to volunteer a few hours of their time and talent to contribute to our paper.***

***If you can write, draw, have a computer, friends say "ya' take a good pitcure," or just want to help Our Community, Please call us at:***

**(916)443-4437**
***or fax to***
**(916)443-3550**

# MARCH HOROSCOPE

By Thor
*TSU* Writer/Columnist

### PISCES
**2/20 - 3/20**

Something is fishy (ha ha ha) with business or finances, but it's temporary. Don't be scared and run. If you're having problems with family, they'll ease up, but won't go away. You're gonna have to talk about it with that person. And be prepared to compromise as they will, too. Clean out your car, you have had things in the trunk that should be in the trash. Smile more too, it'll get you places this month.

### ARIES
**3/21 - 4/20**

Get out of town. You've been a good kid and now you're sick of your house and you're gonna go stir crazy soon. You're up for a promotion but you have to ask for it, your boss wants to see your guts. Show 'em you have it in you. (Trust me, you have guts.) Be careful with money. You'll need the extra you save on your trip to buy some new "personal items." Give lots of hugs to those close to you; you're being way too stingy with your love.

### TAURUS
**4/21 - 5/21**

Call your Mother or Grandmother; they really miss you! And you need to put your usual stubbornness on hold. The conflict you are having is because you're not seeing the point. I'm not saying the other person is right -- I'm not saying you are either -- but that isn't why you're having the conflict. It's because you're not getting it. You're getting a raise too. Buy your complement a gift with that extra few bucks.

### GEMINI
**5/22 - 6/21**

Just because you're paranoid doesn't mean someone isn't out to get you. That person you've been suspicious of, well you're right, but they don't even know it. Explain why you're suspicious, and they'll explain what they want from you. Your health is suffering a bit, so be careful and take your vitamins.

### CANCER
**6/22 - 7/23**

If you've been looking to buy a house and having a hard time, you'll find it this month. You must be open to it but it's waiting for you. You're also wearing yourself down; relax and have a cup of cocoa and a St. John's Wort -- you need it! Don't let other people's problems stress you out (not that you would, yeah right). Buy yourself that little trinket you've wanted. It's inexpensive and dumb, but if you don't, you'll just keep obsessing about it.

### LEO
**7/24 - 8/23**

If you're sitting around wishing you had another job or career, quit whining and get your resume together. That job is looking for you, but will not come knock on your door. Be the tenacious person you are, show some confidence, and go take what's yours. Clean out your closet. It's disgusting to you and all who see it. You need to be organized when the new positive changes come your way.

### VIRGO
**8/24 - 9/23**

Watch your health carefully. If you're having lower intestinal pain, see a doctor. Your car needs maintenance as well. It may be a simple oil change you've been putting off, but do it. Although you may be tempted to do it yourself, as you do everything else, part with the $20 and have it done. Go slow this month; you need a break.

### LIBRA
**9/24 - 10/23**

You have a family member who needs your attention. I know you like to spread yourself out, but spend time with that person now. They may not be around long. You also need to change the message on your answering machine. It's been there too long and it sounds depressing to others (which explains your high rate of hang ups). Go out and have a little fun this month; you're bored stiff!

### SCORPIO
**10/24 - 11/22**

Hold on to that money. The money you've held back is going to be needed. It may be for that new car you've wanted. If you happen to be female and pregnant you may be looking for a boy. If you're male and pregnant you're gonna have problems with the birth. If you've been working on a business deal, it may be done. Don't expect payment till mid-month. Behave yourself. I know it's hard for you, but don't get excited. Be patient.

### SAGITTARIUS
**11/23 - 12/21**

You must quit chasing love or it won't be able to catch you. Concentrate on finances, because this is a wise time to invest your money. Are you listening to your intuition? If not, you better start. It knows what it's telling you. You don't have to listen to your Mother, but you have to listen to yourself. If your inner voice is telling you to listen to her, then do it. You may find yourself needing your parents' help financially this month.

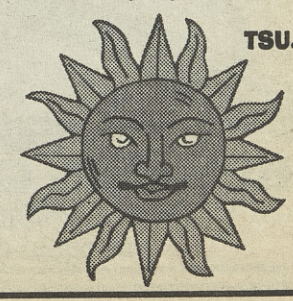
### CAPRICORN
**12/22 - 1/20**

Now's the time to invest in that item you've been wanting. You need to keep a low profile. A child is gonna get on your nerves, and you may say something you'll regret. Drive a different route to work. You're getting into a rut, and you need to take yourself out of it before you become your Mother.

### AQUARIUS
**1/21 - 2/19**

Drink lots of juice and water this month 'cause you're drinking stuff that isn't good for your kidneys way too much. Your mate is going to ease some financial matters by bringing in some extra money. If he/she/it says they're working late, you need to believe it. You need to concentrate on details (like cleaning your oven) to ease stress. I know it sounds like it might be boring, but so is drama, and you've had enough of that.

**TSU...**



# All You Can Eat!

By Bitty Whitlock Jr.
*TSU* Food Editor

The purpose of this page is very simple -- to make eating as enjoyable as possible. Eating is something we all do whether we're the die hard meat and potatoes fan or the strict vegetarian. In the belief that anything that must be done, should be done as well as possible, this page will try to offer the best from every "school" of eating.

We will travel beyond the normal boundaries of standard restaurant reviews and bring you gems of information at which others may scoff. Which Eppie's has the best service? What's the perfect place for those intimate moments? What if you're planning for a group night out?

We'll also include tips for those with more selective diets. Advice on how to ask for what you need and how to get what you want.

We expect top regional chefs to contribute to this page, and we might print my mom's recipe for "Missouri Chocolate Surprise."

Sacramento area restaurants, as well as those in outlying areas, will be spotlighted, ideas will be shared and eating will be done! Please join us in our adventure of taste.

TSU...

# Little Bit Of Texas Bar-B-Q and Cabaret

By T. Laine Cunningham
*TSU* Contributing Writer

Taste buds suffering from the winter blahs? Well jump back, baby, and haul your butt down to A Little Bit Of Texas, 10433 Folsom Boulevard in Rancho Cordova. This family-run joint is guaranteed to put the zing where it belongs: in your mouth. This barbecue is astonishing.

Begin by perusing a menu loaded with every form of meat known to man: beef and pork ribs, turkey, chicken wings, fried shrimp and oysters, tri-tip steak and sausage are offered in various combinations. The meats are smoked right outside the front door over a fire of hickory logs, and the tempting odor can be detected from far down the road. The hickory imparts that special tang to the meat, and if you choose the ribs, your hands will smell deliciously like the smoke hours after your meal.

A Little Bit of Texas
L.B.O.T.
BAR-B-Q
and Cabaret
*An Authentic Southern Dining Experience*

Both the beef and the pork ribs are juicy and surprisingly tender considering the intensity of the flavor. The basting sauce bites your mouth with a tomato base that is not overly sweet, the deadly mistake of other BBQ places. The sausages, pudgy links longer than my hand, are classified by the owner as "somewhat warm." The heat of the sausages builds with every mouthful, and you may want to temper this dish with an order of Texas beans. L.B.O.T. also offers combination plates where you choose the types of meats, and you may want to try the sausage this way first.

For those who prefer a sturdy bowl of something hot on a winter's day, the chili is another sure winner. Nearly thick enough to eat with a fork, the chili is nicely flavored with cumin. There is just enough heat to wake up your mouth, but only the most timid diner would consider this dish too spicy. A "screaming hot" version is also available for individuals who need to thaw out a little more quickly, or just for you folks who might be a little more adventurous. With a slice of L.B.O.T.'s thick, moist cornbread, a small bowl of this chili goes a long way.

Lest you think this a carnivore's dream, L.B.O.T. offers a wide selection of side dishes with meals. Everything from french fries to bread to potato salad can be used as a side or ordered ala carte. The fact that there are two types of collard greens on the menu, one with pork and one with turkey, should clue you in to the fact that these people are serious about their Southern traditions. The fried corn, another uncommon offering, is sweet and gummy and cools the spice fires nicely. Deserts include peach cobbler, cherry cheesecake, and a sweet-potato pie fragrant with black flecks of allspice. Whole pies may also be purchased.

In two visits, one dine-in and one carry-out, the service was consistently friendly and homey. Prices are modest ($5.95 for the average lunch special, a few dollars more for a dinner) and the portions are enormous. The owners cook alongside the hired staff, and are more than happy to answer any questions you may have about the meals. As the L.B.O.T. staff pays a lot of attention to the quality of the food, be prepared for a slightly longer wait than at a chain restaurant. So sit back and relax for a bit. Play one of the odd country-rock songs from the jukebox. Slow down and get ready to savor.

The one problem encountered at L.B.O.T. was the accuracy of the take-out order. I requested a combo meal with pork ribs, tri-tip beef and links but received a combo with beef ribs and links instead. This error shrinks almost into insignificance when the overall dining experience is considered. Just be sure to check your order before you leave. Trust me, you do not want to miss the opportunity to dine at this rib joint. The quality and pride L.B.O.T. invests in its meals pays off with every bite.

TSU...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***"Pride and Perceptions..."***
***Continued from page 3***

parents marching along with their sons and daughters, there are political candidates. There's more than drag queens and naked people in a gay pride parade, yet that's what everyone focuses on.

***Q. The families and more "wholesome" or "mainstream" groups that march and tend to get overlooked, do you feel they are more representative of the majority of Our Community?***

A. Oh, I think so. I think the parades, for the most part, are very representative.

***Q. What does "Gay Pride" mean for you?***

A. I have a different attitude on the subject of Gay Pride. I'm proud of myself for my accomplishments. I'm not ashamed of being gay, but I'm not "proud" of it. I understand pride to be the opposite of shame. We have to declare that we're here, but I wouldn't go march in a parade because I - had thoughts. My sexuality is a part of who I am and I've done a lot of work to recognize that...to realize that and not separate it - not live it as a separate part of my life. But the parades serve a function for people who feel they need to do that - for people who don't feel they can be who they are 100% of the time. They need a place to go to be free or to exhibit that side of them they can't exhibit at their job of with their family. I hope we always have the parades. I think [for myself] it's more an attitude of celebration than declaring my freedom or my pride. I'm as free as I want to be. We all are when it comes right down to it.

***Q. What do you look forward to in the near future?***

A. I'm pushing for the day when my partner and I will go down to City Hall and apply for a marriage license because we want to and because we can. And we should be allowed to.

Rosa Parks did not go down to City Hall and lobby for the right to sit on the bus. She just got on. I think that's what we need to do. I think we need to stop whining and start acting.

***Q. Any suggestions to someone who doesn't know where to start?***

A. Volunteer. Just do something! Get active in Our Community. You'll meet good people, you'll feel better. You'll get another opportunity to exhibit that side of yourself that side of yourself that only has the chance to come out in June or when you go to Faces. There's any number of things a person can do in Our Community, they just have to take that step and do it.

**TSU...**

***"Reflections"***
***Continued from page 7***

I would have thanked him for teaching me about God and faith. Learning from him how to have faith in God and life in general may have been his greatest legacy to me. It has allowed me to have peace of mind and has taught me that my security is inside of me. Of course, having Dad around was always reassuring.

My Dad died today....

As my family gathered, we talked of him, of how much he loved us, and of how much we loved him. I never told my Dad why I loved him, but my faith tells me that, now, he knows. That makes me feel better.

**TSU...**

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***Trans 101: TV/TS***
***Continued from page 16***

reflect the burgeoning core personality. It is then that transsexuals generally come to the self-realization that their mind is of the opposite sex than their genetic gender.

Unlike transvestites, a transsexual's male and female core personalities begin to overlap. "It can best be described as breaking down a facade that the transsexual had to build up in youth to conform to the expectations of their genetic gender," says Rachel. "There is this whole process of chipping away at the outer areas in a quest to determine one's personality as a whole. Once that is done, there's no more flip-flopping from one gender to the other. One simply is."

TGs who allow themselves to dress on a regular basis soon feel the need for human contact while in their alternate persona. "Some people may think we go out in public to get some sort of sexual thrill and that's just not true," Rachel says pointedly. "All people have the need for social contact; it's a fact of being human. Plus, by the time one is ready to attempt going out dressed in public, the sexual aspect would most likely have stopped quite a while before. Besides, male-to-female transgendereds don't want to be sexually excited when they're tucking. Ouch."

If cross-dressers allow themselves to dress as much and as often as they desire, most have found that the desire to dress will subside for some period of time. "But it doesn't stop. It always comes back throughout a person's life, regardless," Rachel notes.

"I get so sick of hearing people talk about it, even within our own community, like it's a disease -- like they're trying to find a cure. You can't cure someone if they're not sick," Rachel says adamantly. "It's a natural variation of behavior for our species. Genetics and development are a roll of the dice and you get what you get. That's all there is to it."

Others argue that transgendered behavior is a result of society's stringent demands to adhere to outdated gender roles. A man must override any desire to be "taken care of" or "nurtured" for fear of being labeled a "wimp." Softer emotions are traditionally assigned to the female. Cross-dressing allows a man to experience his softer, more nurturing side, which then allows the core identity shift to begin.

For most TGs, Halloween is the first opportunity to attempt social interaction while dressed. "It provides the 'cover' that many feel they need at first," Rachel notes as she tosses her hair over her shoulder. "It's an opportunity to explore and discover yourself, and at the same time, not worry about being ridiculed by the general population."

"Society-at-large is too ready to assume that the stereotypical overly-effeminate man is the only one with the internal drive to participate in transgendered activities," Tom, a thirty-something bodybuilder quips while adjusting his jeans to display the top of his lace panties. "On the contrary, I think our community, like the gay community, knows no limit of variations of types or tastes."

"Rachel" and "Tom" are fictitious names used to protect the individuals interviewed.

***"Just As I Am"***
***Continued from page 10***

older parishioner in her home. While waiting for her in the living room he saw a bowl of nuts on the coffee table. He was hungry. He took one, then another, then another. He was horrified to see that he had almost finished the bowl when she stepped into the room. Hastily he apologized.

"Don't worry about it Pastor," the widow responded, "I was already going to give them to the Church. Since I lost my teeth the only thing I can do is suck the Chocolate off of them, anyway."

We all have cheap selves...giving after the chocolate is gone. But we all, also, have a better self. It is this better self that brings about the good in *Our Community*. We need to be about getting over our cheap selves. We need to set apart a regular, unselfish, gift to share. We can do amazing things together. And what is more, acting from our better selves feels good. We understand, through giving and sharing, just how rich and powerful we really are. We can do anything.

## Q&A From Our Readers

And finally, in each issue, I want to respond to questions from the readers. We can talk about *"Homosexuality: Not a sin, not a sickness. What the Bible does and does not say."* We can grapple with those very few scripture references which homophobic "Christian" ministries contort to bash *Our Community*. I will do this in response to specific questions from our readers. We can talk about religion in the news. But mostly, this column is about the "great secret" the fox told "The Little Prince." Remember? *"Only that which is invisible is essential."* The spiritual is that which is invisible: integrity, self-respect, love, pride of accomplishment. Religion is about the spiritual...the invisible.

**TSU...**

***Rev. Elder Freda Smith is known in Sacramento as the Senior Pastor of River City Metropolitan Community Church Cathedral of Promise. Because of her effort on behalf of the gay and lesbian community, Rev. Smith received the 1996 "Woman of the Year Award" from the California State Legislature, and the "Women in History Award for Courage" from the Sacramento History Center. Rev, Smith may be reached by email at Revfsmith@aol.com.***

## Key To Transgender Terms

- ***Core identity***: Refers to the individual's inner self.
- ***Cross Dress For Less***: Slang term referring to shopping at discount department store.
- ***Cross-dresser (CD)***: Anyone who wears clothing of the opposite sex.
- ***D.R.A.B.***: Dressed as a boy.
- ***D.R.A.G.***: 1. Dressed as a girl. 2. Also may refer to an old style of stage dress.
- ***Drag queen***: Usually, but not always a gay male who dresses in female clothing for entertainment purposes only.
- ***Dress***: To be in full opposite sex attire.
- ***FTM***: Female to male; a genetic female who wishes to appear male.
- ***Gender F******: Someone who uses elements of both the male and female sex to purposefully confuse "the public." Usually done in a blatant or shocking manner.
- ***Gender Reassignment Surgery***: Medical procedure in which the genitalia are re-constructed, using plastic surgery, into that of the opposite sex.
- ***GG***: Genetic girl; an individual who was born female.
- ***Getting Read***: When "the public" realizes an individual is dressed.
- ***MTF***: Male to female; a genetic male who wishes to appear female.
- ***Shaving***: Slang for medical procedure which decreases the size of the "Adam's apple."
- ***Transgendered (TG)***: Umbrella term for people who present themselves as the sex opposite of their genetic gender. Term encompasses "transsexual," "transvestite," and "drag queen."
- ***Transsexual (TS)***: A person whose psychological gender does not match his/her genetic gender. Many opt for gender reassignment surgery.
- ***Transvestite (TV)***: A person who receives emotional fulfillment by wearing clothes of the opposite sex.
- ***Tucking***: Placing the penis and testicles between the legs to create a smooth outline. Sometimes performed with medical tape or specially designed restraint garments.

**TSU...**

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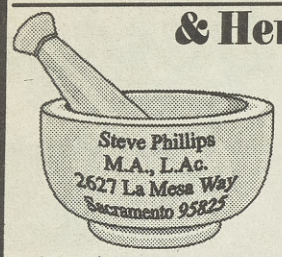


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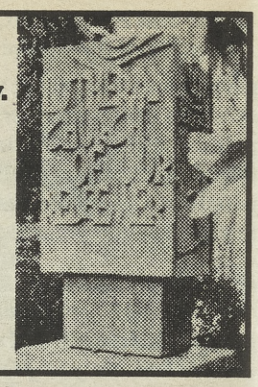

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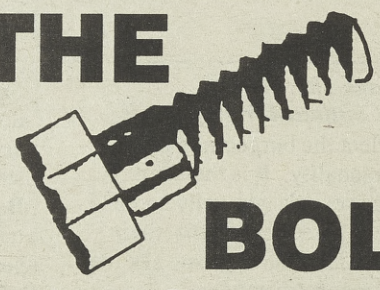

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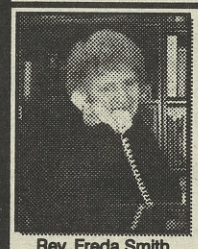

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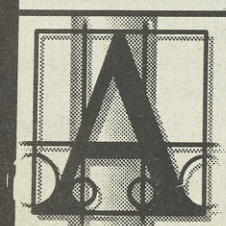

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